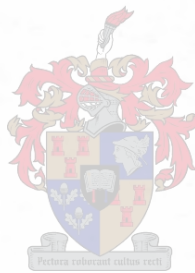


**A NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH  
TO THE STRUCTURE  
OF THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN**

**YOUNG JANG**



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Doctor of Theology  
at the University of Stellenbosch**

**Promoter: Prof. H.J.B. Combrink**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:



## ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the structure of the Apocalypse from the narratological viewpoint, to further the adequate interpretation of the book.

Throughout this work, three things are presupposed: (1) the Apocalypse follows an episodic, non-chronological pattern; (2) the Apocalypse is a coherent unit; (3) the Apocalypse, as a genre, should be defined by means of form, content, and function.

To start with, earlier attempts to reveal the structure of the Apocalypse are briefly dealt with in chapter 2, in order to establish both their weak and strong points. With these in mind, this study attempts a three-dimensional approach consisting of syntactic structure (form), semantic structure (content), and pragmatic structure (function). In chapter 3, this approach is supported by Chatman's narrative paradigm (1980) as a model for narrative analysis.

In chapter 4, to establish the syntactic structure, we started by delimiting the whole text into many small parts - "partial narrative units" - by using *various narrative elements*, and then assembled the small sections into "basic (or complete) narrative units (BNU or UL1)" by using *several identifying criteria* for them, and continued to identify the "bigger narrative units" (UL2,3,4) by using *various integrating strategies* until the biggest narrative, which comprises the whole text as a coherent unit (UL5), emerged.

As a result, *the narrative-syntactic structure* (viz. the surface-level syntactic structure) and *the fundamental-syntactic structure* (viz. the deep-level syntactic structure) of the book are disclosed at the end of chapter 4.

In chapter 5, then, the content (the narrative theology) of the book is shown through both *the narrative-semantic structure* (viz. the theme-oriented concentric pattern) and *the fundamental-semantic structure* (viz. the macrostructure), both of which are based on the syntactic structure (esp., plot).

Finally, in chapter 6, to show how the book functions to persuade the hearers/readers in both the literary context and the external (socio-historical) context, the transforming power to reverse the old worldview of the hearers/readers is sought through *the narrative strategies* of the book in both contexts.

Briefly speaking, while chapter four is related to the syntactic structure (form) of the Apocalypse and chapter five is related to its semantic structure (content), chapter six can be said to correspond to the pragmatic aspect (function).

To conclude, this study could modestly be said to articulate the following results:

- (1) The syntactic structure of the Apocalypse, as an integral unit, shows movement from an unstable state to a stable condition, which means that God's sovereignty will be established on earth – "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
- (2) The semantic structure shows that the Apocalypse revolves around the activity of Jesus Christ, who is the cohering theological-element of the structure of the book.
- (3) The functional structure shows that the Apocalypse rhetorically requests the faithful to witness to God's word until the end of the world and the wayward to repent because the time is near.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie beoog die ondersoek van die struktuur van die Apokalips/Openbaring vanuit 'n narratiewe oogpunt om voldoende interpretasie van die boek te bevorder.

Dwarsdeur die werk word drie dinge voorveronderstel: (1) die Apokalips volg 'n episodiese, nie-chronologiese patroon; (2) die Apokalips is 'n samehangende eenheid; (3) die Apokalips, as 'n genre, behoort deur middel van vorm, inhoud, en funksie gedefinieer te word.

Aanvanklik word daar in hoofstuk 2 kortliks gekyk na vroeër pogings om die struktuur van die Apokalips te openbaar ten einde hul sterk en swak punte vas te stel. Met dit in gedagte, beoog hierdie studie 'n drie-dimensionele benadering bestaande uit sintaktiese struktuur (vorm), semantiese struktuur (inhoud), en pragmatiese struktuur (funksie). In hoofstuk 3 word die benadering ondersteun deur Chatman se paradigma (1980) as 'n model vir narratiewe ontleding.

In hoofstuk 4, om die sintaktiese struktuur vas te stel, is begin om die hele teks in baie klein deeltjies af te baken – “gedeeltelike narratiewe eenhede” – deur *verskeie narratiewe elemente* te gebruik. Daarna is die klein deeltjies in “basiese (of komplete) narratiewe eenhede (BNU or UL1)” saamgestel deur *verskeie identifiserende kriteria* daarvoor te gebruik, en daar is voortgegaan met die identifisering van “groter narratiewe eenhede” (UL2,3,4) deur *verskeie integrerende strategieë* te gebruik totdat die grootste narratief, wat die hele teks as 'n samehangende eenheid (UL5) insluit, te voorskyn gekom het.

Gevolglik word die *narratief-sintaktiese struktuur* (nl. die oppervlakkige sintaktiese struktuur) en die *fundamenteel-sintaktiese struktuur* (nl. die diepgerliggende sintaktiese struktuur) van die boek aan die einde van hoofstuk 4 getoon.



In hoofstuk 5 word die inhoud (die narratiewe teologie) van die boek deur beide die *narratief-semantiese struktuur* (nl. die tema-georiënteerde konsentriese patroon) en die *fundamenteel-semantiese struktuur* (nl. die makrostruktuur) getoon, albei gebaseer op die sintaktiese struktuur (veral plot).

Ten slotte, in hoofstuk 6, om aan te dui hoe die boek funksioneer om hoorders/lesers in beide die literêre en eksterne (sosio-historiese) konteks te oorreed, word die transformerende mag om die ou wêreldsiening van die hoorders/lesers om te keer, gesoek deur die narratiewe strategieë van die boek in beide kontekste.

Kortliks gestel: waar hoofstuk 4 verband hou met die sintaktiese struktuur (vorm) van die Apokalips, handel hoofstuk 5 met sy semantiese struktuur (inhoud) en hoofstuk 6 met sy pragmatiese aspek (funksie).

Hierdie studie lei dan tot konklusies:

- (1) Die sintaktiese struktuur van die Apokalips, as 'n integrale eenheid, toon beweging van 'n onstabiele staat tot 'n stabiele staat wat beteken dat God se oppermag op aarde gevestig sal word- "U wil geskied op aarde soos in die hemel."
- (2) Die semantiese struktuur toon dat die Apokalips om die aktiwiteit van Jesus Christus handel – wat die samehangende teologiese element van die struktuur van die boek is.
- (3) Die funksionele struktuur toon dat die Apokalips die getroues retories versoek om as getuie vir God se woord te dien tot die einde van die wêreld en die afvalliges om berou te toon aangesien die eindtyd naby is.

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I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my maternal grandmother, Jung-Sun Kho, who loved me unconditionally and hoped in vain for me to return in her lifetime.

Rev. Y. Jang

Stellenbosch, RSA

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\* English scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

\* Greek scripture quotations are from the Greek New Testament edited by K Aland, M Black, CM Martini, BM Metzger and A Wikgren. Third corrected edition © 1966, 1968, 1975, 1983 by the United Bible Societies.



## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1. Problem

There have been various interpretations of the Apocalypse from ancient times to the present. However, a number of expositors have tended to regard the construction of the Apocalypse from a chronological perspective whereby they connect the events and visions in the Apocalypse in their own way to the historical referents.

Despite the warnings of critics like Giblin (1994:81-95), who emphasised that interpreters must avoid historicizing any aspects of John's vision of the end by interpreting them as specific factual events of history, such wrong interpretations abound and are not decreasing even as the new millennium begins.

Many daring interpretations based on the Apocalypse anachronistically correlate its ancient images or symbols with current events, which has often led to strange delusions.<sup>1</sup> What is worse, the most dangerous interpretations have been made by extreme eschatologists, which have ended tragically in many cases.<sup>2</sup>

The above phenomena appear to come from three kinds of misinterpretation of the Apocalypse: firstly, a literary plot is mistaken for a chronological flow (syntactic problem). Secondly, God's intention is misjudged, and the theology of the Apocalypse seen in a negative way (semantic problem). Lastly, John's message is misused in a specific situation (pragmatic problem).

### 1.2. Motivation

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<sup>1</sup> Some extremists equate the European Common Market with the "ten horns of the beast" (13:1-10), Red China with the "kings from the East" (16:12), the mark of the beast (666) with everything from credit cards to the Internet, and the Antichrist with a parade of prominent people, including Hitler, Mussolini, Kissinger, Khrushchev and Gorbachev.

<sup>2</sup> For, example, April 19, 1993 saw a most extreme example of this in the Branch Davidian sect, the group led by David Koresh. At least 70 died after a fire and a shootout with police and federal agents ended a 51-day siege of the "Ranch Apocalypse" at Waco in Texas.

Many readers tend to find the meaning of the book elusive, and are further confused by such extreme approaches to John's narrative, even if they consider the book inspired of God and therefore relevant to their lives on earth. The anachronistic reading of the book, therefore, has caused more harm than good.

As responsible interpreters, we should read the Apocalypse as "a book of powerful imagery, of profound warning and ultimate promise that speaks to the church through the ages." (Pate 1998:9). I include myself in this commitment. When I, as a pastor, attempted to study the book with my congregation, I always felt somewhat inadequate. I decided, therefore, to apply myself to the intensive study of the book in order to increase my own understanding and also that of God's people, as part of my servanthip for my Lord. I felt challenged to find an adequate interpretation of the Apocalypse as already revealed by Jesus Christ to his servants (1:1).

### **1.3. Aim and Methodology**

A clear understanding of the message of the Apocalypse depends to a great extent upon a good grasp of its structure. However, the Apocalypse is an extraordinarily complex literary composition. The complexity is seldom fully appreciated, and calls for a multi-dimensional approach, drawing insights from many other structures and also approaching the Apocalypse from various angles – such as the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic.

This study can be said to have a modest purpose: it is designed as a springboard to further study in order to approach more closely to the deeper meaning and real purpose of the book in the future. Using the narrative theory, my study aims to establish an appropriate syntactic-structure (chapter four) according to its narrative elements (chapter three), to identify the theological semantic-structure (chapter five), and then to seek the pragmatic-structure (chapter six) of the Apocalypse, by enquiring into narrative strategies (in the literary context or the external context) to persuade or correct or transform the readers/hearers.

## 1.4. Presupposition

### 1.4.1. The Apocalypse has an Episodic and Non-chronological Pattern

“The content of language (the narrative substance or ideas) and the forms (the patterning or arrangement of content) reflect the way people perceive their world” (Wilson 1997:14, cf., Fiorenza 1985:176).

The Greek mind imagined *the world carried on the back of a giant tortoise*. The Hebrews believed that *the earth was surrounded by chaotic waters, above and below, which were held back by a great domed canopy (the firmament)* (Wilson 1997:15). These glimpses of the ancient cosmological perceptions help us to understand the imagery/figurative language used in John’s narrative.<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that, until fairly recently, history for the ancient people was not seen in terms of a linear view of time, but as episodic and repetitive. There was no sense of progress. Scriptural narratives tend, therefore, to be episodic and cyclical. Unlike the modern linear idea of time, the ancient Hebrews understood time in a random pattern analogous to the random journeying of the Hebrew people, while the Greeks understood time as cyclical, as a kind of linear spiral.

“For the *early* Hebrew mind, time was conceived as a vast plain upon which the emerging nation of Israel journeyed from one randomly arranged point or moment of historic significance to another. Later, a more repetitive conception developed. For the Greek mind, time moved in a series of cycles along a linear axis; a sort of spiral continuum. All things repeated themselves with variation” (Wilson 1997:14-15).

According to Fiorenza (1977:356), Jewish apocalypticism did not eliminate time and history as the ritual pattern and ancient myth did. Instead it remained bound to the

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. “...four angels standing at *the four corners of the earth*, holding back the four winds of the earth...” (7:1).



prophetic scheme of promise and fulfilment. History is not reduced, graphically speaking, to a circular movement re-enacting again and again the actions of the gods, but takes the form of a development according to a divine plan toward a promised goal. Nevertheless, the Apocalypse does not reflect so much a chronological sequence as the author's intentional arrangement, namely, narrative plot.

Clearly then, the way people see history affects their depiction of reality. For this reason, the narratives in Scripture seem to follow an episodic rather than a chronological form. Modern readers, therefore, must adjust their interpretative lenses accordingly.

We can extract from these observations two principles that apply to virtually all the techniques of oral/literary shaping: *episodic and non-chronological pattern*, expressed by *an intentional sequence, plot*, reflecting the author's rhetorical purpose to persuade the readers/hearers.

#### 1.4.2. The Apocalypse as an Integral Unity

"The more the Apocalypse is studied in detail, the more clear it becomes that it is not simply a literary unity, but actually one of the most unified works in the New Testament" (Bauckham 1993b:1).

This study opposes theories which divide the book into disparate sources. Theories of this kind have largely been discredited because the Apocalypse as a unified literary composition denies the mere compilation of sources. Therefore, we must take as our starting point the organic integration of the narrative as a unit and go on from there to establish a new structural model for the Apocalypse.

According to Court (1994), critics during the second half of the last century have increasingly tended to treat the work as a literary unit, while accommodating incongruities. The modern reader is aware of a variety of structural devices whereby the author succeeded in ensuring the literary unity of the work.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In contrast, among the older skills of literary criticism, the examination of sources and style in the Apocalypse reached a peak with Charles (1920), whose laborious work produced a minute dissection of



Du Rand (1994:294-295) also mentions that when one wants to make a division of the Apocalypse, it shows a characteristic unity regarding language usage, theological motifs and literary composition, in spite of the apparent discontinuity between various parts. Because of the coherence of formal structure and the constant main theme of theology, all the chapters must be treated as a single writing even when different scholars seek to impose their own division on the Apocalypse.

According to Fiorenza (1977:362), it seems that the author of the Apocalypse does not divide the text into separate sections or parts, but joins units together by interweaving them with one another. Therefore, she argues that it is more crucial to find out the joints of the structure which interlace the different parts than to discover “dividing marks.”

I, thus, shall propose a new narrative approach to the structure in relation to the Apocalypse as a whole, rather than to any particular part of it.

### **1.4.3. Form and Content**

Form and content are inseparable. To understand the Apocalypse well one needs a good grasp of its structure. Against the old dichotomy between content and form, many modern literary critics maintain that the form is not a container for the content but the patterning and arrangement of it. If one changes the order of a text, one changes its meaning.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas a work of art is considered as a system or structure of signs serving a specific aesthetic purpose, the New Testament literature was not written with such a goal in mind. Since the New Testament books are both theological and historical writings, one

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language and text, with the final chapters reordered and reconstructed, and many other passages assigned to an uncomprehending editor as later interpolations or meaningless survivals.

<sup>5</sup> These literary critics, such as Wellek and Warren (1956), Frye (1973), DeGeorge & DeGeorge (1972), Wittig (1975), Watkins (1975), insist that the proper concern of literary criticism is not so much with the external circumstances or effects or historical position of a work, as with a detailed consideration of the work itself as an independent entity (Abrams 1999:180-182).

has not only to analyse the literary patterns and structure of a writing but also their relation to its theological perspective and its rhetorical function in historical setting.

#### 1.4.4. The Apocalypse and Function

Caird (1966:1) points out that God never speaks simply to convey information, but always to achieve results.<sup>6</sup> Baldick (1990:125) also notes that, in Christian theology, the Word of God “λόγος” is referred to as the origin and foundation of all things.

Every writing can be said to be rhetorical insofar as it is written to influence its reader. In this sense, the Apocalypse also is rhetorical.<sup>7</sup> The Apocalypse, as God’s word, has an effect on the conscious readers.

Insofar as Groome (1980:15) understands *political activity* “to be any deliberate and structured intervention in people’s lives which attempts to influence how they live their lives in society,” we may change his term “*political*” into “*rhetorical*” in our functional context. John attempts to develop in His people a critical-conscious attitude and capacity to shape their lives in society for the present and future. The Apocalypse, thus, can be said to be a ***rhetorical writing*** to call upon people “*deliberately and intentionally to attend to the activity of God in our present, to the Story of the Christian faith community, and to the Vision of God’s Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us*” (:25). Therefore, the content of John’s message, the purpose declared by God, has its own function to persuade the hearers/readers in their rhetorical socio-historical situation.

From the foregoing remarks, we can deduce that a multi-faceted (syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic) narratological approach to the structure of the Apocalypse would be necessary for a better understanding of the theology and the function of John’s narrative.

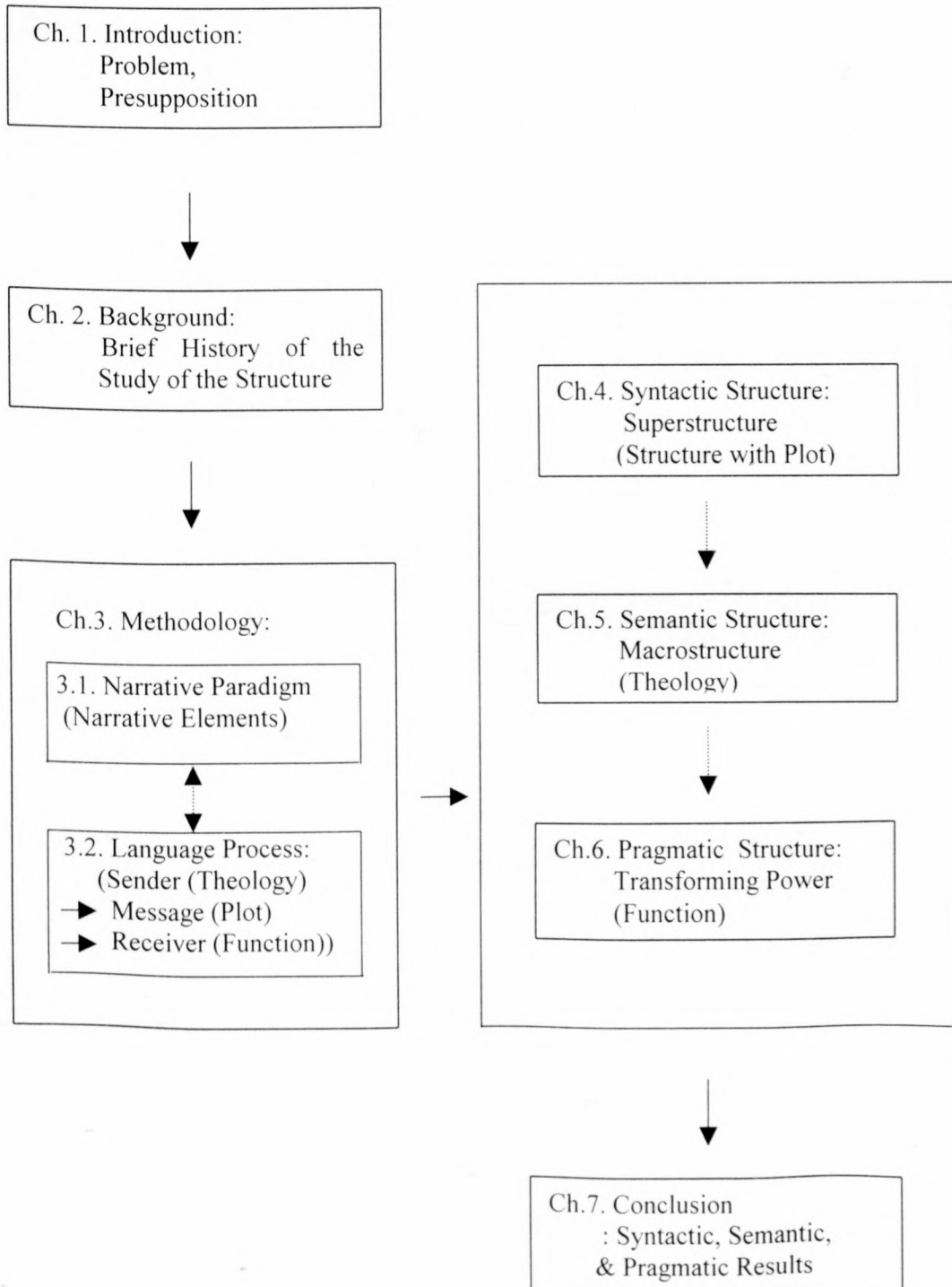
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<sup>6</sup> “He spoke and it happened; he commanded and it came into being” (Ps. 33:9). “My word shall not return to me empty-handed, but shall accomplish what I purpose and succeed in the task I sent it to do” (Isa. 55:11).

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy (1984:6) argues that at the heart of a distinctive rhetoric of religion lies “authoritative proclamation” unlike other contemporary “rational persuasion.”

“While a building is more than its framework, the frame does in fact delimit the nature of the whole edifice” (Kempson 1982:40).

## 1.5. The Procedure for the Study of the Structure of the Apocalypse of John





## Chapter Two: Background

### 2.1. The History of the Study of the Structure of the Apocalypse

#### 2.1.1. Introduction

In the history of New Testament interpretation, few books can claim to be more unique and complex than the Apocalypse of John. It is definitely one of most frequently mentioned books of the New Testament. But it also ranks amongst the most controversial books and one of those which have given rise to the most varied interpretations. One of the main debates surrounding the Apocalypse has been the problem of its structure.

The study of literary structure in the Apocalypse probably depends on each interpreter's style and presupposition, which, together, can reveal the ultimate structure of the book. "In each instance, the final structure will only be as strong as the presuppositions on which it is based" (Kempson 1982:39). We, thus, cannot expect a good result from only one perspective. Rather, what is needed in identifying the structure may be the principle suggested by Pate (1998:10):

"The sum total of the whole is greater than the individual parts. What is called for is the realization that we as humans, with finite understanding, need each other's insights, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, in order to grasp the intent of God's Word."

Its structure looks very enigmatic but a veiled sense of organisation and development in the work is likely to be uncovered.<sup>1</sup> Granted that John wrote neither meaninglessly nor aimlessly, we must seek answers to certain questions: What narrative logic and/or elements governs the order in which John presented his material? (Chapter Three); what is the *syntactic* structure to outline the Apocalypse? (Chapter Four); What is the

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<sup>1</sup> If one insists on the absence of structure of the Apocalypse, this feature must be ascribed both to John's artistic freedom and to the intentional skillful framework with which John worked.

theology of the Apocalypse to be shown through the *semantic* structure ? (Chapter Five); What is the narrative function of the Apocalypse to be obtained from the *pragmatic* structure? (Chapter Six). Through my study, I will continually endeavour to provide plausible solutions to these main questions.

For this purpose, I start with a critical examination of prior studies regarding its structure. Through this brief survey, we will benefit from the faults and strengths of past analyses and extract from them positive and negative guidelines for establishing a workable literary structure.

### **2.1.2. The Various Proposals for Structure of the Apocalypse and their Classification**

Despite many proposals, the problem of literary analysis of the Apocalypse remains a controversial matter among scholars. There may be many reasons for this disagreement, but only a few be discussed here.

- Although it is a new time limited literary form (BC 200- AD 200), apocalyptic literature utilizes almost all kinds of the traditional genres and also the newly appearing genres in John's time - such as liturgy, myth, drama, prophecy and also letter and gospel. This diversity makes it difficult to define its peculiar characteristics (Snyder 1991:440-450).
- The sense of time and development is confusing. The concept of time in ancient eras, with their oral-oriented cultures, differs sharply from the modern era, with written-oriented culture (Wilson 1997:13-16). Scripture is largely episodic, often patterned concentric or repetitive. However, modern readers would likely read these texts through the interpretive lenses of the linear narrative progression that one expects from modern compositions (:16-34).
- The logical flow of thought and the temporal sequence of the visions appear to be interrupted and disturbed by the interludes, inconsistencies, repetitions and doublets



of the text (Fiorenza 1977: 358-62; Bauckham 1993b:1-37).<sup>2</sup> Interweaving method seems to be preferred to dividing strategies in the Apocalypse. Fiorenza (1977:362; cf. Barr 1984:43) states that “whereas our concern is to divide the book, John’s concern was to bind it together.”

- The images and symbols are often arbitrary and multivalent (Fiorenza 1977:345) and the linguistic features that might point to aspects of the structure of the text may be analyzed in a variety of ways (Aune 1996-1998: xci).

Some scholars<sup>3</sup> have done a broad survey regarding the Apocalypse’s structure. They agree that the great numbers of proposals render classification and criticism difficult. In this respect, Kempson’s categorizing principles (1982) have been most helpful in classifying various structures. Despite the multiplicity of outlines, Kempson claims that the Apocalypse’s interpreters may be divided roughly into two groupings: those who follow external approaches and those who opt for internal approaches. Firstly those who pursue “external approaches” to the structure of the book, are determined by some factor or group of factors outside the book— e.g., liturgy, drama, myth, and so forth (1982:45). Those who pursue “internal approaches,” by contrast, deal more specifically with the inner literary construction of the work— e.g., key phrases (such as “and I saw” or “in the Spirit”), a verse such as 1:19, the number seven, and so on (Kempson 1982:72).

When categorizing various structures of the Apocalypse, I follow Kempson’s classification in the main, while differing in certain respects. Firstly, I divide them into external and internal approaches, being subdivided into five and six respectively. External approaches includes (1) approaches based on prior literature, (2) approaches based on ritual pattern, (3) approaches based on drama, (4) approaches based on symbolism, and (5) approaches based on structuralism. Internal approaches are

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<sup>2</sup> According to Fiorenza (1977:345), traditional exegesis which rejects the historical-critical approach has tried to explain the inconsistencies, repetitions and doublets of the text either as due to the faulty memory of the author, who wrote the book in lengthy intervals, or has reasoned that an incompetent student has edited the whole work with poor understanding after his death.

<sup>3</sup> Among others are Feuillet (1965), Strand (1973), Guthrie (1973), Fiorenza (1977), Kempson (1982), Léon (1985), Du Rand (1991).

subdivided into (1) septenary approaches, (2) content approaches, (3) phrase approaches, (4) recapitulation approaches, (5) concentric approaches and (6) transposition approaches. Actually, these approaches tend to overlap. This categorizing is not wholly adequate but serves the purpose of bringing order to a complex and unsettled debate.

### **2.1.3. The History of Structures of the Apocalypse: Various Structures and their Merits and Shortcomings**

Strictly speaking, the literary outlines of the Apocalypse do not have formal developmental history since each scholar has studied it more or less on an independent basis. Every division is likely to have an element of subjectivity. Thus each literary analysis shows something of a disparate character. Here, therefore, major structures of the book often cited in current literature will be surveyed briefly and criticized according to their congeniality rather than their developmental history in order to find a new workable structure appropriate for a literary analysis of the Apocalypse. To this end also, other approaches' merits and flaws will be taken into consideration.

#### ***2.1.3.1 External Approach***

##### **2.1.3.1.1. Approach based on Prior Literature**

Some scholars think that the Apocalypse may have a similar structure to other writings with an apocalyptic cast.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of Glasson (1965:12-13), he compares six parts from Ezekiel and the Apocalypse with each other.<sup>5</sup> His suggestion rightly seeks to place the Apocalypse in its

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<sup>4</sup> In the structural studies of Rist (1957), Glasson (1965), Smith, (1994:373-393), such an approach exists. Rist (1957:360) compares the Apocalypse's structure to II Esdras 3-14 in support of a sevenfold structure. Smith (1994:373-393) in his article also uses structural conventions of other apocalypses to explore the Apocalypse's structure. He (1994:381) claims that Jewish-Christian apocalyptic texts written in or around the first century will suggest the structural conventions of the Apocalypse.

<sup>5</sup> (1) The prophet in captivity sees a vision of the divine person: Eze 1 (God) vs. Rev 1 (Christ)  
 (2) Messages to the people of God are delivered: Eze 2-24 (to the Jewish people) vs. Rev 2-3 (to the churches)



own generic genre when Smith (1994:381) claims that “an examination of representative Jewish-Christian apocalyptic texts generally held to date from the first century CE will suffice to suggest the structural conventions of the genre at the time the Apocalypse was written.” Glasson (:13) says, “It can hardly be accidental that this agreement is so close,” but it is doubtful whether John ever intended such a parallel structure as he suggests. The parallels seem to be not as close as Glasson claims.<sup>6</sup> Swete (1977:cliv) is to the point in stressing that John’s “handling of these materials is always creative and independent, and he does not allow his Old Testament author to carry him a step beyond the point at which the guidance ceases to lend itself to the purpose of his book.” This approach based on prior literature should be corrected by other approaches.

#### **2.1.3.1.2. Approach based on Ritual Pattern**

An abundance of cultic language and liturgical symbols and settings of the Apocalypse suggests to some scholars that the author intended to write the book in the form of a ritual.<sup>7</sup> Attention was mainly focused on chapters 4 and 5 as reflecting ritual in the early church.

Shepherd (1960:83) notes that the paschal liturgy in early church worship provided the author with the model for the structure of his book as a whole. He (:48-64) mentions that the ancient paschal liturgy consists of five parts: (1) the scrutinies as an examination time for the worship service, (2) the (all night) vigil continuing up to the actual service, (3) the private initiation including the baptism of the new converts, (4) the synaxis as assembling for public worship, (5) the eucharist, with which the service

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(3) Judgments are pronounced: Eze 25-32 vs. Rev 6-19 (introduced by visions of God in Rev 4-5)

(4) The Messianic kingdom is described: Eze 33-37 vs. Rev 20:1-6

(5) The attack of Gog follows: Eze 38-39 vs. Rev 20:7-15

(6) A vision of final glory and peace for the redeemed people of God: Eze 40-48 vs. Rev 21-22

<sup>6</sup> According to Kempson (1982:47), the relative distribution of material is disproportionate. Moreover, Ezekiel is not the only, not even the major, source of imagery and thought in the Apocalypse. Few would argue with the observation that John was thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament documents, or that John’s knowledge of this material influenced his thought and method of presentation.

<sup>7</sup> Among scholars who pursue this approach are Piper (1951), Mowry (1952), Cullmann (1953), Shepherd (1960), Tompson (1969).



ended. He, then, finds that the structure of the Apocalypse reflects the same sequence of this liturgy (:77-84).<sup>8</sup>

Shepherd offers an unusual and interesting insight. However, criticisms of his approach disallow total acceptance of his work. He has been criticized for imposing a ritual pattern from the later church upon an earlier work (cf. Krentz 1961:499-500). The precise correspondence between the scrutinies and the letters of chapters 1-3<sup>9</sup> is sometimes questioned (cf. Sanderson 1960:185). Other critics attribute the parallels (found by Shepherd) to the basic subject matter of Christianity<sup>10</sup> rather than to John's intention (cf. Richardson 1960:185). Most scholars agree that the Apocalypse obviously has a ritual setting and form. The ritual elements, however, are just one type of structural components of the book which needs conjunction with other component types in the writing of the Apocalypse. In brief, even a superficial comparison of a ritual book and of the Apocalypse shows that all these proposals force a liturgical pattern on the text (Fiorenza 1977:353).

As regards this approach, the imperial game can be briefly dealt with here because it assumes another type of ritual.

Stauffer (1955) claims that the structure of the Apocalypse reflects the imperial games which celebrated the power of the Caesar at major cities of the Asian province. He parallels the order of these celebrations with that of the Apocalypse content (:174-191).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> (1) "The Scrutinies" vs. Rev 1-3, (2) "The Vigil" vs. Rev 4-5 and Lessons vs. Rev 6, (3) "The Initiation" vs. Rev 7, (4) "The Synaxis" vs. Rev 8, Prayers vs. Rev 8:3-5, Law vs. Rev 8-9, Prophets vs. Rev 10-11, Gospel vs. Rev 12-15, 16-18, Psalmody vs. Rev 19, (5) "The Eucharist" vs. Rev 19-22.

<sup>9</sup> The former was a time of examining catechumens while the latter were written to Christians, many of whom had proven already their faithfulness in the face of persecution. Also, the initiation aspect of baptism does not exactly parallel the sealing of the 144,000, nor does it match the vision of the countless people of God who have finished their journey (:133).

<sup>10</sup> According to Richardson (1960:185), "since Christianity is basically about the passion, the resurrection, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, one can find these almost anywhere.

<sup>11</sup> (1) The games began with a *reading of imperial decrees* vs. Rev 2-3 (the seven letters delivered to the seven churches)

(2) These were followed by the *singing of doxologies and alternating hymns to the king* vs. Rev 4-5

(3) The actual contests began with the *delivery of a scroll* investing authority over the games vs. Rev 5 (The Lamb received the scroll)

(4) The games (*the series of contests*) vs. Rev 6-18 (the series of seals, trumpets, and bowls)

These parallels deducted from the Apocalypse by Stauffer seem to be too forced although his view is very imaginative. This approach also needs conjunction with other component types in the composition of the Apocalypse. And thus it is doubtful whether the entire book can be reduced to only one genre, considering that each division is likely to be one-sided.

2.1.3.1.3. Approach based on Greek drama

Interpreters have not merely acknowledged the dramatic character of the book but have maintained that the Apocalypse is patterned after the Greek drama, since it has *dramatis personae*, stage props, chorus, a plot and a tragic-comic ending.<sup>12</sup>

Bowman (1955c) applies a dramatic approach to the Apocalypse. He even proposes that the references to props and settings are implied in the Apocalypse.<sup>13</sup> He (:450) maintains that John used the form of drama - by creatively erecting a new Hebraic-Christian literary structure on the old scaffolding provided by the Greco-Roman stage - in order “to present in dramatic style the same gospel which had already formed the topic of two other new literary forms, the so-called ‘gospel’ and ‘letter’.” In establishing his scheme, Bowman assumes that there are seven acts, each having seven scenes. In his opinion, if he (1955c:15f; 1962:64f) could discover them, it would be reasonable to suppose that they exist. His analysis yields a sevenfold structure.<sup>14</sup>

Bowman ignores the interruption of the seals and trumpets series (7:1-17: 10:1-11:14)

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(5) The games would end with *a joyous celebration of the king's presence* vs. Rev 19-22.

<sup>12</sup> The proponents of this approach are Eichorn (1791), Benson (1900), Palmer (1903), Brewer (1936), McDowell (1951), Bowman (1955c), Blevin (1984).

<sup>13</sup> According to Bowman (1955c: 22ff., 42ff., 60, 76, 98, 110, 140), stage settings are found in 1:9-20; 4:1-5:14; 8:2-6; 11:19; 15:1, 5-16:1; 17:1-2; and 20:4-6.

<sup>14</sup>

Prologue			1:7-8
Act I	Seven	Letters	1:9-3:22
II	Seven	Seals	4:1-8:1
III	Seven	Trumpets	8:2-11:18
IV	Seven	Pageants	11:19-14:20 & 15:2-4
V	Seven	Bowls	15:1 & 15:5-16:21
VI	Seven	Plagues	17:1-20:3 & 20:7-10
VII	Sevenfold Plan		20:4-6 & 20:11-22:5
Epilogue			22:6-20



into the flow, and forces some transpositions or dislocation to match his plan (15:2-4, 15:1, 20:4-6). Although the Apocalypse was written in a dramatic pattern, there is virtually little evidence of the dialogue form of drama. His structure seems to stand on an unsubstantiated assumption. He *assumes* seven acts rather than *finds* seven acts in the Apocalypse. That each act should have seven scenes also seems to be purely forced. Moreover, whether John actually had a particular stage in mind is still debatable.

According to Fiorenza (1977: 354), “the intriguing argument for the influence of Greek dramatic forms on the Apocalypse must be the use of choruses by John.” Just as the choruses in the Greek drama prepares and comments upon the dramatic movements of the plot, so do the hymns; that is - the hymns comment and complement the visions and auditions of the book. A dramatic approach to the Apocalypse also yields positive fruits in tracing the unity and progress of the work.

#### **2.1.3.1.4. Approach based on Symbolism**

Farrer (1949,1964) explains the Apocalypse according to various underlying series of symbols. He reckons that the clue to the Apocalypse is in its structure, and by finding a fixed pattern of symbols underlying the book, the structure can be revealed. He uses the week, the Jewish liturgical and festival calendar, and the signs of the Zodiac as the three main symbolic keys in order to yield a complex diagram of interlaced patterns<sup>15</sup>. He conceives that John obviously followed this diagram in composing the Apocalypse.

This extremely complicated structure can hardly be expounded without using various and elaborate diagrams increasingly. Regrettably, to fit the various schemes, he constantly adjusts facts, even altering the actual order of zodiac signs, feast dates and other phenomena (Kempson 1982:65).

Farrer demonstrates the unity and cohesive nature of the Apocalypse as other external

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<sup>15</sup> Farrer links the number seven to the week, according to which the sevenfold structure of the book is ordered (1949: 37-59). He also uses the jewels in the high priest's breastplate, the twelve tribes of Israel, and the solstices and equinoxes of the sun as clues (:185-244).

approaches have shown, with too much complexity. It is, in any events, doubtful, whether the Apocalypse as a whole can be reduced to such a core of symbolism.

#### **2.1.3.1.5. Approach based on Structuralism**

Structuralists claim to study the text through deep structures which they regard as the primary frame of the text in question. Patte writes that “A structural analysis of a text is thus the study of the structures which presided over its creation (1976:25).”

In studies on the Apocalypse, some scholars like Fiorenza (1977,1985,1991), and Gager (1975) have used structuralism as their basic model for dealing with the Apocalypse. However they have not produced a unified result to the book’s analysis.

Gager has recently attempted to apply a structuralist understanding and analysis of myth in the composition of the Apocalypse. He maintains that not only does the pattern-of-seven determine the structure of the book, but also that the binary structure of myth is decisive. The seven and two patterns “meet to create a ‘machine’ for transcending time” (:52). In his proposal the sections and patterns of the Apocalypse are all pressed into the binary structure of victory/hope and oppression/despair.

Fiorenza offers a good example of the comprehensive use of structuralist techniques in outlining the book of the Apocalypse (1977:344-66). She says that the structure of the Apocalypse can be portrayed completely from a structural perspective, on the actantial model which was designed by Greimas for mythical narratives.<sup>16</sup>

This method seeks to find clues for interpretation within the text itself without reference to anything outside of the text (Patte 1976:1-20). As a result, the importance of historical background is reduced in favour of the inner structure of reality. If external controls on analysis of the text are removed, the literary critic can then freely impart

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<sup>16</sup> The actantial model was developed through the analysis of Russian fairy-story for application to mythical narratives by Greimas (1966). A defence of the model is given by its originator, Propp (1928).



into the text what is meaningful to him, but which is not necessarily a part of the thought of the author. This is a general weakness of the structuralist approach to the literature of the New Testament.

Structuralists offer some valuable insights into the problems of literary analysis in the Apocalypse. Fiorenza (1977:346f) rightly points out that source and compilation theories cannot prove the unity of language and imagery in the work. She (:350) reminds us that structural analysis drives home that the total composition of a work can be derived only from the theological intention of the author, not from its sources or traditions. Nevertheless, scholars who value the historical factors or the authorial intention find this method unsatisfying.

The contribution of structuralism lies in emphasising the overall unity and wholeness of the Apocalypse and demanding that the Apocalypse be heard as addressing the present day. The meaning of the text was not meant only for the first century. This offers an explanation to generally idealist interpretations of the Apocalypse (Fiorenza 1968, Bandstra 1970, Ellul 1977).

### ***2.1.3.2. Internal Approach***

#### **2.1.3.2.1. Septenary Series Approach**

The use of the number seven is possibly the most noticeable literary strategy of the Apocalypse. The number seven seems to be deeply integrated into Jewish beliefs, indicating the number of divine perfection and holiness. In the Apocalypse it does not only characterize the churches, their angels, and the spirits of God but also functions as a basic structural component in the composition of the book. The four septets (the letters, the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls) decisively structure the Apocalypse. Thus, it has often been maintained that the whole plan and composition of the Apocalypse is patterned after the number seven.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Some reconstruct seven (Bowman 1955c) or ten series (Lohmeyer 1926) of seven, whereas others

The sevenfold division is convincing to many interpreters because the Apocalypse itself makes so much of the number seven. A general and popular sevenfold division helps the reader to cope with the content. However, various scholars who employ this approach disagree on where to make divisions, which reveals the particular weakness of the septenary method.

There is no denying the major significance of the number seven in the four explicitly drawn out series: seven letters, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls.<sup>18</sup> Yet, to impose the same sort of septenary structure on other sections of the Apocalypse is arbitrary and unsound. The difficulty of such reconstructions lies in the failure to explain why the author clearly marked four series of seven but did not mark the others, even though the existing septets prove that he was quite capable of doing so.

#### **2.1.3.2.2. Content Analysis Approach<sup>19</sup>**

According to Kempson (1982:79), a content analysis is the method of outlining the work which begins with an overview of the literary units of the work and moves to an overall reconstruction of the larger framework. Scholars following this more conservative approach seek for a structure in which the parts that literarily belong to one another are grouped together.<sup>20</sup>

Swete (1977) starts by finding forty-two basic sections in the Apocalypse, following natural units of thought. He groups them into fourteen major sections. By further reducing the divisions, he finally schematizes the whole book with two main parts,

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recognize only four (Bauckham 1993a; Kempson 1982; Farrer 1964), five (Palmer 1903) or six series (Collins 1976; Farrer 1949; Lohmeyer 1926) of seven.

<sup>18</sup> According to Bauckham (1993b:9), the three series of seven judgments are distinguished from the seven messages to the churches (chapters 2-3). The churches are not numbered in sequence, only named, but the order in which they occur is determined by geography (the route John's messenger would follow, starting from Ephesus).

<sup>19</sup> Du Rand (1991: 304) designated it as literary division.

<sup>20</sup> Among others are Mounce (1977), Allo (1933), Swete ([1921] 1977).



demarcated by chapter 12.<sup>21</sup>

A content analysis also deserves sufficient consideration in order to distinguish basic units and group them into larger constructs. Indeed, the process of content analysis must support the whole efforts to outline the book. At this point, the problem of subjective evaluation arises with grouping or connecting the small units (Swete 1977:xxxviii; Mounce 1977:45).

Scholars' failure to search for literary clues which could bind the basic units together reveals a major weakness of their approach (cf. see 4.3.2.2.2.).<sup>22</sup> For this reason, this approach needs to be complemented by many other literary techniques - which can render the work a careful artistic composition rather than a random compilation (Allo 1933:xciii) - from other internal approaches. Nevertheless, a content analysis can be used at the first stage to search for the literary structure in the Apocalypse. The final outline must also show the continuity of content.

### 2.1.3.2.3. Phrase Approach

Quite a few scholars have employed particular phrases in formulating literary structures.<sup>23</sup> They use several phrases to find the structure of the Apocalypse. The phrases which they like to look for are striking markers as "in the spirit" (1:10; 4:2;

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<sup>21</sup> Prologue and Greeting (1:1-8)

Part i.

Vision of Christ in the Midst of the Churches (1:9-3:22)

Vision of Christ in Heaven (4:1-5:14), Preparations for the End (6:1-11:19)

Part ii.

Vision of the Mother of Christ and Her Enemies (12:1-13:18)

Preparations for the End (14:1-20:15)

Vision of the Bride of Christ (21:1- 22:5)

Epilogue and Benediction (22:6-21)

<sup>22</sup> At this point, it seems to be appropriate for Allo (1933: lxxxii-lxxxvi) to note three laws of composition within the Apocalypse as follows:

(1) The law of "embodiment" refers to seemingly out of place events which allude to realities that appear later in the book. These are actually literary devices used to give a hint of a later revelation or, conversely and preferably, what is embryonic in one part is more fully developed later.  
 (2) The law of "undulations" states that the numerous repetitions are not evidences of sources but devices of the author to describe something again with more precision and clarity.  
 (3) The law of "perpetuity of antitheses" notes that contrasting figures are employed for effect.

17:3; 21:10); “What must soon take place” (1:1; 1:19; 4:1; 22:6); “flashes of lightning, rumbles and peals of thunder” (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:8) and the doxologies (4:8-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11:15; 15:3-4; 19:1-8).

Tenney (1957:32-41) suggests two criteria for employing a phrase as a literary device. First, the phrase should be used repeatedly with the segmenting function at the beginning or end of literary sections and used thus as a reliable marker in the literary structure of the work. When deviations from that usage appear, it must be able to be explicated. Second, the use of a phrase to distinguish the sections of a work must match with other supporting factors to validate the divisions so postulated. He successfully applies these criteria to “in the Spirit” in his interpretation of the Apocalypse. At first, there are four times John is said to be “in spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι in 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:9). Each of these reflects a transition in place (Patmos, heaven, a wilderness, and a mountain), and some also reflect a transition in time. These transitions occur at key places in the book. Secondly, the thematic unity of each section further corroborates that these four visions are indeed the main contents of the Apocalypse (:33). A prologue (1:1-8) and an epilogue (22:6-21) complete the book.<sup>24</sup>

The use of phrases in the Apocalypse is a valuable method for discovering the units which John has used. Particularly, the phrase “in the Spirit” deserves to be properly examined and valued as a literary marker.<sup>25</sup> Tenney’s work is basically sound for main division but needs to be developed in more detail for the relationship of various parts as well as for the subdivision of the Apocalypse. Indeed, his approach should be supplemented by many other sound approaches.

<sup>23</sup> Among others are Tenney (1957), Snyder (1991), Bauckham (1993b).

<sup>24</sup> Prologue Christ Communicating 1:1-8  
 Vision I Christ in the Church 1:9-3:22  
 Vision II Christ in the Cosmos 4:1-16:21  
 Vision III Christ in Conquest 17:1-21:8  
 Vision IV Christ in Consummation 21:9-22:5  
 Epilogue Christ Challenging 22:6-21

<sup>25</sup> Tenney also uses other phrases “I saw” “thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake,” and the word “sign” as literary devices. He, however, seems to use them just as secondly (:34f).



#### 2.1.3.2.4. Concentric Approach (ABCDC'B'A')

Some scholars argue that the Apocalypse, either as a whole or as a part, is established upon a concentric structure.<sup>26</sup>

According to Fiorenza (1977:344-66), the apocalyptic pattern of judgment and salvation forms the basis for a division of the Apocalypse in a concentric architectural manner. She stresses the prophetic role in the course of the narrative from promise to fulfillment. The three series of fulfillment of judgement in the seals, trumpets and bowls of wrath move in the direction of greater fulfillment. Using the actantial model for her analysis, She made a basic chiastic structure to the Apocalypse with the small scroll of prophecy in 10:1-15:4 as the climactic centre of the action.<sup>27</sup>

Fiorenza seems to succeed in combining the form and content into a possible, but subjective, division of the Apocalypse. She finds the center of the book (10:1-15:4) to be the prophetic scroll and the main function of the Apocalypse - "the prophetic interpretation of the political and religious situation of the community"(1985:175-76). This assessment, however, is somewhat vague. In addition, it is unclear as to why 10:1-15:4 should represent the basic interpretation of the situation of the community over other (more explicit) sections such as the seven letters.

#### Chapters 17-22 as an exegetical problem

This part has shown itself to be an exegetical Gordian knot, especially in a chronologically sequential framework (e.g. Charles 1920, 2:144-54). Giblin (1974:504) and Snyder (1991:450) maintains a concentric structure for the final outcome of the judgment of the harlot and the vindication of the bride which seem to solve some of the problems in regards to the sequence in 17-22.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Among others are Fiorenza (1977), Snyder(1991), Giblin(1994), Lee(1998).

<sup>27</sup> A (1:1-8), B (1:9-3:22), C (4:1-9:21; 11:15-19), D (10:1-15:4), C'(15:1, 5-19:10), B (19:11-22:9), A'(22:10-21).

<sup>28</sup> cf. Lee (1998:164-94) and Fiorenza (1977:364,5) insist on the concentric division for the Apocalypse as a whole.

According to Snyder (1991:447), several key problems can be cleared up if one accepts the finality of the seventh bowl in 16:17-21. From his perspective, the Apocalypse 17-22 is not chronologically sequential to 16:21, but reflects the final outcome of the judgement accomplished with the seventh bowl, indicating the final outcome of the judgement of the harlot and the vindication of the bride. The sequence is thematic and logical. The thematic development of this final outcome in 17-22 would be displayed in the concentric structure.

In disagreement with Fiorenza's interpretation of John's eschatology, Giblin (1974:504) insists that the attested, single but twofold judgement (that is, 17:1- 19:10 and 21:9-22:6ff) is not to be grasped in terms of *ongoing salvation-history*, an unfolding of God's plan through various periods, but as the decisive moment of God's judgement at the end of the present "*short time*." Furthermore, he calls for a revision of the literary structure of the Apocalypse as proposed by Fiorenza, arguing that the thematic correlations of divine judgement and divine vindication are harmoniously expressed in the very literary structure of 16:17ff in terms of correlated narratives and correlated disclosures (explanatory discourses).

One of the problems with concentric (or chiastic) structures is the subjectivity which often accompanies the structure. According to Snyder (1991:449), several criteria should be applied in the proposed concentricism:

First, the concentricism should reflect a thematic correspondence between the corresponding sections. Secondly, breaks between sections should be independently reflected in other analyses and outlines. That is, a legitimate break will be recognised again and again by various scholars, whereas a questionable break will not be supported by other analyses. Finally, the concentricism should account for doublets which are problematic in a chronologically sequential reading of the Apocalypse. The concentric structure means that the sequence is developed thematically *in inverse order*, rather than chronologically.



### 2.1.3.2.5. Recapitulation Approach<sup>29</sup>

It is accepted that Victorinus of Pettau is the founder of recapitulation as exegetical theory (Du Rand 1991:273). As the three series of seven seals, trumpets, and bowls manifest numerous parallels, many interpreters support Victorinus' suggestion of recapitulation.<sup>30</sup> He proposed that the seven bowl plagues (15:1-16:21) do not chronologically follow the seven trumpet plagues (8:6-11:15) as part of a continuous series but actually they are parallel accounts of the same events, which are recapitulated in another form. This is not to be described as mere repetition, but it is applied purposefully for the sake of intensification and progression.

Various commentators differ in their definition of recapitulation.

In modern models of interpretation, the recapitulation theory is mainly applied to the formal structure of the Apocalypse in order to explain the conspicuous repetition. It also comes to include the repetition of *themes* and matters of *content* (Du Rand 1991:273).

Collins (1976: 32-4)<sup>31</sup> has proposed that the principle of recapitulation is evident in five cycles of visions; Motifs that regularly occur or are recapitulated in these five cycles include: (a) persecution, (b) the punishment of the nations, (c) the triumph of God, the Lamb, and/or the faithful. Centrally she is concerned with similar patterns of motifs that are observable throughout various sections of the Apocalypse. However, the term "recapitulation" does not seem appropriate for this kind of repetition.

<sup>29</sup> One of the central problems in analyzing the central section of the Apocalypse, particularly from 4 to 16, is to determine whether various sections recapitulate earlier sections, or the author intends to present a chronological sequence of eschatological events.

<sup>30</sup> Kempson (1982:86-7) mentions Ladd (1972), Morris (1969), Caird (1966) and to some degree Sweet (1979), Beasley-Murray (1977) as modern employers of this approach.

<sup>31</sup> (1) the seven seals (6:1-8:5), (2) the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19), (3) seven unnumbered visions (12:1-15:4), (4) the seven bowls (15:1-16:21), with the Babylon appendix (17:1-19:10), and (5) seven unnumbered visions (19:11-21:8), with the Jerusalem appendix (21:9-22:5). Collin's division is largely and one-sidedly determined by the idea of wrath and retribution called for by the saints according 6:9-11. The use of the designation "unnumbered" is somewhat disquieting, since the author-editor is perfectly able to use the number seven explicitly when he wishes to. Further, the two appendices in 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:5 are extensive sections of text that Collins apparently cannot integrate into the overall structure of the Apocalypse.

Lambrecht (1980) has slightly different, but quite an interesting approach. He takes the progression which takes place between the seals, trumpets and bowls of wrath seriously. He succeeds in illustrating that the techniques of recapitulation and progression are well integrated in the Apocalypse.<sup>32</sup> Thus, he successfully deals with the Apocalypse as an artistic literary unit, although his analysis is somewhat forced.<sup>33</sup>

Giblin (1994:81-95), being sensitive to the literary structure of the Apocalypse, redefines recapitulation in terms of a plot line that recurs throughout the central section (4-22) of the book. A recurring plot line, which can be another way of viewing the cyclic pattern of the narratives in Judges, does not constitute “recapitulation” in the classic sense (Aune 1996-1998: xcii).<sup>34</sup>

It is doubtful whether the three series of seven are as parallel as the recapitulation approach suggests. The trumpets and bowls exhibit such a great similarity that an assertion of recapitulation between them is not easily challenged. However, the assertion of a parallel among all three series is hard to maintain without some amount of uncertainty.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A Introduction: the scroll (4-5)

B 1st six seal (6-7)

C Seven seals and trumpets (8:1-22:5)

A Introduction: 7th seal (8:1-6)

B 1st six trumpet and bowls of wrath (8:7-11:14)

C 7th trumpet and bowls of wrath (11:15-16:1)

A Introduction: 7th trumpet (11:15-16:1)

B 1st six bowls of wrath (16:2-16)

C 7th bowl and completion (16:7-22:5)

<sup>33</sup> He says that the Apocalypse indeed shows a sequential development. However, this still does not imply an obvious stringing together of events on the same line since interruption and interpolations generally occur.

<sup>34</sup> That is, just because the book of Judges uses a stereotyped outline to narrate the experience of premonarchic Israel in terms of recurring cycles of national apostasy, enslavement, repentance, deliverance (see Judg 2:11-23) does not mean that each cycle should be designated a “recapitulation” of the others.

<sup>35</sup> First, while the seals begin with the exhibition of the four horsemen (6:1-8), the trumpets and bowls begin with four plagues poured out on the created order (8:7-12; 16:2-9). These two sets of quartets are diverse enough to challenge seriously a strict recapitulation among all three series. Furthermore, the fifth elements in the series do not match. The fifth seal (6:9-11) reveals the martyrs of God underneath the altar. The fifth trumpet (9:1-11) displays the demonic hordes of the abyss; the fifth bowl (16:10-11) pours out judgement on the kingdom of the beast. Finally, the last elements in the series lack balance. The last seal (8:1) is vague and unclear as to its content. The trumpets and bowls end clearly and unmistakably with the



### 2.1.3.2.6. Transposition Approach

The Apocalypse as a whole evolves quite a different reaction when it is heard or analyzed because “the logical flow of thought and the temporal sequence of the visions seem to be interrupted and disturbed, the sense of time and development confused, and the images and symbols often arbitrary and multivalent” (Fiorenza 1977:345).

According to Charles (1920), the present incoherent and self-contradictory nature<sup>36</sup> of the text is due to the reworking of an editor who has misunderstood the thought of the author. As Charles has reordered the material to make the final chapters and has assigned many other passages to an uncomprehending editor as later interpolations or meaningless survivals, the book falls into seven parts plus a prologue and an epilogue (: xxv-xxviii).<sup>37</sup> He shows an outline which meets his own demand for order and harmonious progress. Additionally, he thinks that the clumsy work by this editor leads to the appearance of recapitulation. Thus, he, a trenchant critic of the theory of recapitulation, refused to grant that each of the three series of seven visions deals with the same events (1920, 1: 1-lv).

Fiorenza (1977:344-350) introduces three attempts - (1) The compilation theory, (2) The revision theory, (3) The fragment theory - to sort out this disorder of the Apocalypse.<sup>38</sup>

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advent of the coming world judge (11:15-19; 16:17-21). Additionally, the seals are administered by the Lamb; the trumpets and bowls are revealed through angels.

<sup>36</sup> For example, unchastity, murder, and idolatry exist on the new earth after the final judgement; the conversion of the heathen is still in progress.

<sup>37</sup> Fiorenza (1977:345-50) has Charles' approach belong to the compilation theory.

<sup>38</sup> Many scholars, especially in nineteenth century, sift and separate those elements which either destroy the logical or temporal sequence, or disagree with what is conceived as Christian in the book, and make in order a narrative “in such a way that it represents a logical, linear, and unified theological system.”

(1) The compilation theory

This theory assumes that the Apocalypse is more or less mechanical compilation of Jewish and/or Christian sources by one or more redactors (Ford 1975; Weiss 1904; Weyland 1888; Vischer 1886).

(2) The revision theory

The revision theory supposes that the Apocalypse is based upon a written text, which was complete in itself, but which was reworked several times before reaching its present form (to some extent Vischer can be said to belong to this theory).

(3) The fragment theory

The fragment theory does not try to disassemble the book and to reorder it according to logical or

None would demean the value of Charles' monumental commentary.<sup>39</sup> Still, the manner in which he has freely rearranged the text is an unacceptable practice. When one tries to rearrange the material in a more logical order (preferable by the modern mind), his attempt should be rejected. This is precisely the flaw of Charles.

The transpositional method has little lasting value. More than anything else, it is marred by the subjectivity of the analyst, the constant flaw of this approach to literary structure.

#### **2.1.4. Conclusion**

1. Thus far, with the help of Kempson' classification of structures I have briefly surveyed eleven kinds of structures, proposed by many scholars. Despite many proposals, they have never reached consensus. This survey shows that no single method of analysing the Apocalypse can claim perfect adherence. Perhaps each structure should be corroborated by other approaches to yield good results.

2. The study of literary structure in the Apocalypse probably mostly depends on each interpreter's subjectivity, which is revealed in the ultimate view of the book. In each instance, the final structure can be said to be only as strong as the presuppositions on which it is based.

3. Whereas each of the external approaches draws its own general conclusion according to each analyst's (one-sided) view of the complex genre of the Apocalypse, the internal approaches have uncovered more detailed observations about the structure of the Apocalypse. Every approach endeavours to show the unity and cohesive nature of the

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theological principles, but explain its doublets and discrepancies by postulating that the author used various oral and written traditions in composing his book (Bousset 1966; Charles 1920).

<sup>39</sup> The examination of sources and style in the Book of the Apocalypse reached a peak with two-volume commentary by Charles in the International Critical Commentary series (Edinburgh 1920). Twenty-five years of work produced a minute dissection of language and text, with the final chapters reordered and reconstructed, and many other passages assigned to an uncomprehending editor as later interpolations or meaningless survivals.



Apocalypse, although flaws exist and the analyst's subjectivity is reflected.

4. John must have used certain structural entities within the whole text - the four septenary visions are among the most obvious examples – which should bring the Apocalypse into cohesive unity. However, John also seems to utilize other unifying concepts, such as theme and function, to unite the different parts of his narrative.

5. Although each of the approaches has its own shortcomings, the new structure cannot come from a vacuum or stand in isolation. Therefore, a fresh attempt can build on the positive contributions of previously surveyed structures, whilst rejecting their flaws.

## **2.2. The Importance of Studying the Narrative Structure as a Means of Interpreting the Apocalypse**

There seems to be very broad agreement, if silent, among the Apocalypse's interpreters as to how its structure should be sought – through one of two sound principles of biblical interpretation: assessment of a book according to the conventions of “its literary genre,” or hermeneutical inquiry after “indicated authorial intent” (Smith 1994:377).<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, some improvement in the manner in which structure of the Apocalypse is viewed can be proposed because of the following reasons:

It is hard to define the peculiar literary genre of apocalyptic literature since it utilizes all the traditional forms of liturgy, myth, prophecy, etc (Fiorenza 1977:356) so that the difference of the genre is related to the different perspective from which various readers approach the text. Therefore, if we try to establish the structure of the Apocalypse as a whole based on only one literary genre such as drama, liturgy, or games each of which forms just a part of the text, this would be only partly relevant, but would be unreasonable or farfetched in relation to the text as a whole. Thus we need a more

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<sup>40</sup> Approaches based on “its literary genre” and “indicated authorial intent” in Smith's article (1994: 377) should be in line with “external approach” and “internal approach” of Kempson (1982) respectively.



comprehensive approach to establish the structure of the text as a whole, such as an attempt to understand the Apocalypse as Scripture (based on historical events) and literature (in which artistic strategies have been used to persuade the readers).<sup>41</sup>

Among those seeking the real authorial intent, it is difficult to find general consensus. As the real biblical authors cannot be interviewed, reconstructing their intention beyond the text is bound to be hypothetical. Therefore we need another standard for interpretation such as the intention of *the text*, which is accessible today, instead of the supposed intentions of *the real authors*, to which contemporary access is denied (Powell 1990:95).

Narrative criticism seems to meet the requirements above better because it is a comprehensive approach which considers the scripture (through which the Christian community shares their confession and experience, based on historical facts) as literature (used literary artistry to affect the readers), but also it is text-centered (or implied reader-centered) rather than real authorial intent-centered (Mckenzie & Haynes 1993:171).

I will apply a narrative perspective in my attempt to analyze the Apocalypse structurally. This I especially endeavor to do for the following two reasons:

1. The narrative approach for the analysis of structure may not only have the advantage of being very comprehensive, but storytelling also seems to have been “the most important traditional method” for delivering God’s words in the Christian community.
2. A narratological structure of the Apocalypse is based on a view that the message of

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<sup>41</sup> This can be achieved in a “narrative” category rather than an “apocalypse” category. Hellholm (1986:21-22) mentions that “generic structures with *few* characteristics have the character of ‘supreme-concepts,’ while generic structures with many characteristics are typical ‘sub-concepts’” (*italics mine*). This means that there are *fewer* common characteristics of a ‘narrative’ than of an ‘apocalypse,’ allowing more texts to be classified as ‘narratives’ than as ‘apocalypses.’

the Apocalypse can be regarded as “functional.” This offers the readers of all ages, in a specific situation, a message to which they can commit themselves and from which they ought to live.<sup>42</sup> This also effectuates catharsis in the crisis (Collins, AY 1984:141-163). The Apocalypse is not a mere symbolic-poetical work but it is, in fact, an apocalyptic rhetorical work, which has power to persuade the audience to do something.

We, therefore, shall attempt to analyze a structure from a narrative point of view. We are not claiming, however, that this approach is the only method to be followed. On the contrary: “To rely on any one methodological approach is to tell only one of many stories, and therefore deprive ourselves of a rich variety of interpretive approaches, each legitimate and crucial in its own way” (Ledbetter 1993:296). Each of the different perspectives can offer the reader something valuable.

Next, the narrative criticism history will be dealt with as necessary background for the attempt to formulate a new structure for the interpretation of the Apocalypse of John.

## **2.3. The History of Narrative Criticism**

### **2.3.1. Emergence of Narrative Criticism**

One of oldest studies of narrative forms and devices is found in Aristotle’s *poetics* as far back as the fourth century BC. According to Stibbe (1994), however, the emergence of the New Testament narrative criticism can be traced back to Auerbach (1953)’s *Mimesis*, in which he showed appreciation for the obvious realism of the narrative in the Gospel of Mark. Auerbach was followed by a great number of scholars<sup>43</sup> who helped to formulate the narrative approach of the New Testament with their own contributions.

On the other hand, the traditional methods for studying the New Testament were mostly

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<sup>42</sup> One has to realize that “both the ancient Mediterranean world as we infer it and our own world, conscious and unconscious to us, flow into the text. Texts are in the world and of it” (Robbins 1996a:22).

<sup>43</sup> Among them are Wilder (1964), Beardslee (1970), Perrin (1972), Peterson (1978), Kermode (1979).



represented by form criticism, source criticism, historical criticism, tradition history, redaction criticism, and textual criticism.<sup>44</sup> A scholar who chose one of the traditional methods for New Testament interpretation, tried to find out what lies behind the narrative text, especially the Gospels and Acts. They often neglected to view the narrative text itself as having a final unified form.

It was not until the 1980's that the most noticeable changes began to occur. A gush of important studies, researching the New Testament narratives, caused a big shift away from the traditional approach.<sup>45</sup>

The gospel of Mark was the text which drew the initial attention of nearly all the emerging narrative critics. Rhoads and Michie (1982) focused on *the final form of the narrative text* rather than on its hypothesized prehistory, and analyzed the narrative qualities of the book of Mark such as the narrator, narrative settings, plot and characterization. They (:108) concluded that "the author of Mark's Gospel tells a dynamic story and has woven the tale so as to create *a powerful effect on the reader*."

Best (1983:100,112) focused on *the "plot"* which forms the cement binding together all the material selected by the author, to form a unified, narrative Christology. The gospel of Mark as narrative cannot be fictional because there are historical evidences which the author could not freely alter as he pleased. It can be pointed out that biblical narrative is different from fictional novels in regard to *its historicity*.

Regarding the fourth gospel, there were other attempts to show a number of its literary

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<sup>44</sup> Stibbe (1994:5) briefly describes the traditional methods for New Testament study as follows: "What forms of material were available to the evangelists, and how were they used in the earliest church? (form criticism). What sources were available to the evangelists when they wrote their gospels? (source criticism). How much do the gospels tell us about Jesus and about the churches for which they were written? (historical criticism). How much did the words and works of Jesus change during the years before the gospels were composed? (tradition history). What theological and sociological purposes lie behind the evangelist's selection and expression of Jesus material in the gospels? (redaction criticism), and What variations exist in the manuscripts of the gospel texts, and which has the greatest claim to be correct? (textual criticism)."

<sup>45</sup> Rhoads & Michie (1982), Best (1983), Culpepper (1983), Kingsbury (1986), Tannehill (1986), among others, can be represented.



qualities in the 1980s.<sup>46</sup> Among others, Culpepper (1983)'s narrative studies of the gospel of John are the most influential. He (:6) uses *Chatman's communicational model* for a narrative as his starting point, which presupposes a storyteller, a story, and an audience. He focused on the narrative elements which establish the communication between the author and the reader: point of view, narrative time, plot, character, implicit commentary, and the implied reader. The author endeavors to bring new insights into the writing of the gospel of John through the use of these narrative elements, and to convince them of John's supreme purpose (Jn 20:31). He (:4) rejects a historical approach which uses the text as a window to see the thing in ancient times. In saying that the gospel of John is a "novelistic narrative," Culpepper lightly takes it for granted that a gospel can be studied as if it were a novel. In other words, he depends too heavily on the theory of modern fiction put forward by the theorists such as Foster and Chatman. Culpepper's weakest point is "whether the novel-based models are applicable in the context of first-century narratives" (Stibbe 1994:11).

Kingsbury (1986:vii) explores the world of Matthew's thoughts focusing on *the plot* of the gospel narrative. He carries out his investigation by utilizing the modern literary theory, as in the case of Culpepper (1983). His book consists of sections on events, characters, settings, the implied author, the narrator, the point of view, the implied reader, and structure, all of which are analyzed as aspects of Matthew's unified narrative. Unfortunately little attention is paid to historical questions, because "when one reads the Matthean narrative, one temporarily takes leave of one's familiar world of reality and enters into another world that is autonomous in its right" (Kingsbury 1986:2). Thus the same criticism against Culpepper's literary approach of the gospel of John – treating the text as an ahistorical novel – also applies to Kingsbury's work.

Tannehill (1986:1) claims that Luke-Acts is a "unified literary work of two volumes" and that traditional methods of biblical criticism failed to enable scholars to see how a narrative like Luke-Acts achieves unity. Tannehill (:3) uses the "*narrative echo effects*"

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<sup>46</sup> Among them are Giblin (1980), Crossan (1980), Cahill (1982), Webster (1982), Phillips (1983), Nicholson (1983), Domeris (1983), Hartman (1984), Duke (1985), Du Rand (1985), O' Day (1986), Kotzé (1985), Staley (1988).

as the key concept to connect the different parts of the narrative internally saying: “Themes will be developed, dropped, then presented again. Characters and actions may echo characters and actions in another part of the story, as well as characters and action of the scriptural story which preceded Luke-Acts.”

### **The Apocalypse of John with a narrative framework<sup>47</sup>**

While the narrative as the mode of theological expression has been recognized in the Gospels and Acts, students of the Apocalypse’s theology have tended to ignore this particular narrative dimension. Thus not so many scholars<sup>48</sup> have applied narrative theories to the Apocalypse’s theology, though the Apocalypse is closely related to the narrative genre.

JJ Collins (1979:9) published the results of the apocalypse group’s work of the Genres Project of the Society of Biblical Literature in Volume 14 of *Semeia*. The following definition of the genre was proposed:

*“Apocalypse” is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.*

In August 1979 one of the participants in the Uppsala colloquium on apocalypticism, Hartman, argued that the element of *function* should be included in the definition of *Semeia* 14 in addition to those of form and content. He (1983:339) proposed three types of functions: “(1) the literary function - that is, how the text works; (2) the message – what the author wants to deliver to the readers; and (3) the social function - the relation between the text and its social setting.” The proposal of Hartman has been supported by

<sup>47</sup> See 3.1.3.3. *The Apocalypse within Literary and Historical Context*.

<sup>48</sup> Among them are Barr (2000a&b), Resseguie (1998), Du Rand (1997), Boring (1992), Hellholm (1982), Collins (1979).



quite a few scholars who recognize the importance of function in various ways. Hellholm ([1982] 1986: 27) suggested that the definition of *Semeia* 14 be expanded to include further functions: “intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority.” Aune (1986) also emphasizes the way in which an apocalypse renews the original revelatory experience through literary artistry, structure, and imagery. Then, he suggests that apocalypses in general persuade their audience to conform their thinking and behavioral stance to the transcendent perspectives. According to Betz (1983), Greco-Roman apocalypses had the function to motivate changes in life-style through the fearful experience based on an afterlife journey. Alongside works on the literary function of apocalypses, the influential studies of the social function of the Book of the Apocalypse was contributed by scholars like Fiorenza (1985), Collins (1984), and Gager (1983).

Hellholm ([1982] 1986:13-64) takes another important step forward in genre research generally, utilizing text-linguistic methodology. In the macro-syntagmatic approach to the analysis of generic structures for apocalypses, he proposes two necessary and complementary steps in text analysis: (1) division of the text into hierarchically arranged communication levels,<sup>49</sup> “the text-pragmatic aspect,” and (2) division of the text into hierarchical text-sequences,<sup>50</sup> “the text-semantic aspect.” He argues that the identification of communication levels and text-sequences together constitute the generic structures of the text and applies his theory to the Apocalypse, the results of which are published in *Semeia* 36 (1986: 47-54).

Boring (1992) made a fresh attempt to study Christology in the Apocalypse as a narrative mode. He maintains that “inherent in the idea of Christ is the unfulfilled progression of events in history, at the climax of which Christ comes as its Savior and fulfiller. This idea finds its proper expression in the narrative. Thus, the idea of Christ

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<sup>49</sup> The communication levels are of two types, those external to the text (the sender and receiver, authors and reader), and those internal to the text (between *dramatis personae*).

<sup>50</sup> Textsequences are signalled by several types of markers: (a) changes in the “world” (this world; other world), (b) episode markers indicating time and change of time, localization and relocalization, (c) changes in grouping of actors, (d) renominialization (an actor referred to by a pronoun is reintroduced with a noun or name), (e) adverbs and conjunctions which relate clauses to each other.



implies a certain plot: the problem, the action which resolves the problem, and the happy ending” (:702). In his discussion of the narrative Christology of the Apocalypse, Boring mentions the very useful fact that there are four different levels of narrativity in the Apocalypse (:704).<sup>51</sup>

Du Rand (1991:213) maintains, similarly, that “the Apocalypse of John combines history and theology as God’s story and then plots that story. An old story is told in a new way. This God-story should be read as a dramatic narrative within a letter framework.” He (1997:59) further mentions that “theology is the primary unifying thread in the narrative of the Apocalypse. The theological directed narrative scheme also emerges clearly in the formal structure of the narrative.” He, as in the case of Boring, seeks to connect the theology of the Apocalypse with a narratological point of view, saying “The narrative of the Apocalypse is engineered to reinforce a particular understanding of God and Christ among the readers (:60).”

Resseguie (1998) tries a narrative approach to the Apocalypse, focusing on setting, rhetoric, point of view, character, and plot. He uses the methods of narrative analysis that modern literary critics employ in their interpretations of Chopin (1969a & b), Hemingway (1955) etc, to unravel the dense textures of John’s narrative. He argues that “the narrative analysis comes alive and awakens the imagination in ways that more traditional methods of biblical study are not able to do” (:1). His work is a literary introduction to the Apocalypse that tries to apply the methods of narrative criticism to John’s vision. Although he suggests some of the prominent theological themes of the book in the last chapter (five), he, like certain other narrative critics, seems to fail to move further to the function of the Apocalypse.

On the other hand, emphasizing the function of the Apocalypse, Barr (2000a) holds that the application of narrative theories to the book re-invents this ancient work. The function of narrative language is more expressive and performative than

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<sup>51</sup> (1) level 1; John’s/ the Churches’ Story, (2) level 2; the heavenly Christ’s/God’s Story, (3) level 3; The World’s Story, (4) level 4; the narrative Christology of the Apocalypse.

informative. First, apocalyptic stories generally are designed to shape the imagination of the hearer, to allow one to view one's historical situation in a new way, and so allow one to act in a new way. Second, this transformation of the imagination can be seen more particularly in the context of myth and ritual as a kind of mythic therapy. This leads us to a third, still more powerful suggestion. Looking at them more specifically in their ritual setting leads us to look at the Apocalypse as a kind of ritual text. It persuades its audience not with the propositions, arguments, and rebuttals of classical rhetoric, but with the rhetorical (transforming) power of a story (cf. Barr 1998:5).

### 2.3.2. Important Characteristics of the New Testament Narrative Criticism

1. Narrative criticism has usually meant "interpreting the existing text in its final form in terms of its own story world, rather than understanding the text by attempting to reconstruct its sources and editorial history, its original setting and audience and its real author's or editor's intention in writing" (McKenzie & Haynes 1993: 171).
2. Narrative criticism regards the meaning of texts as inseparable from the form in which it is expressed, and so embraces the story as a world to be entered and experienced (Poland 1985:22-55). When we apply it to the Bible, we should understand it as the writing being based on historical events and expressed through literary artistry at the same time.
3. Narrative criticism is a text-centered approach, holding that the text sets parameters on interpretation. Narrative criticism seeks to evaluate its interpretations according to criteria given in terms of the intention of *the text* rather than the intention of *the real author*. Narrative criticism aims to read the text as the implied reader.<sup>52</sup> How does the implied author guide the implied

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<sup>52</sup> Kingsbury (1986:38) describes the implied reader as the "imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always reaching its fulfillment." To read in this way, it is necessary to know everything that the text assumes the reader knows and to forget everything that the text does not assume the reader knows.



reader in understanding the story? Chatman (1978:15-48) says that the reader is guided through literary devices intrinsic to the process of storytelling, such as the narrator's open and indirect commentary and interpretation.

4. Narrative criticism considers that the text as a canon should be consistent with that which believing communities identify as authoritative for their faith and practice. The Christian community has always confessed Scripture itself to be more authoritative than any oral traditions or primary sources behind Scripture. Powell (1990:88-89) argues: "By interpreting texts from the point of view of their own implied readers, narrative criticism offers exegesis that is inevitably from a faith perspective."

### **2.3.3. Advantages and Limits of Narrative Criticism**

In the past century, an enormous amount of research has been devoted to questions regarding the authorship, dating, provenance, and sources of various New Testament books. Even so, very little consensus has been reached. According to Powell (1990:88), an advantage of narrative criticism is that it enables scholars to learn much about the meaning and impact of certain books without first having to settle these persistent and perhaps unsolvable problems.

By interpreting biblical passages in terms of their intended literary effect rather than their apparent historical reference, mythological and supernatural elements (especially in connection with the Apocalypse) which have troubled interpreters for so long, cease to be a problem. Narrative criticism provides some insight into biblical texts of which the historical background is uncertain just as in the case of the Apocalypse of John.

Alter (1981:15), on the other hand, finds the narratology's usefulness limited. He cautions biblical scholars against just taking over some modern literary theory and applying it to ancient texts "that in fact have their own dynamics, their own distinctive conventions and characteristic techniques." It is, therefore, important not to be content with a mere analysis of formal narrative, but to continue to a deeper understanding of



the values and message of the ancient narrative.

#### **2.3.4. Arguments against Narrative Theories as Anti-historical**

Probably the most pervasive objection to the use of narrative criticism in biblical studies is that the method is somehow anti-historical and so undermines the historical grounding of Christian faith. Narrative criticism, however, is certainly not an anti-historical discipline at all. The New Testament narratives like Gospels can't be fictional at all because there are positive evidences of the tradition which the authors could not feel free to alter as they liked. Powell (1990:98) argues that "A symbiotic relationship exists between narrative and historical approaches to texts. They can be used side by side in a supplementary fashion. They might even be viewed as necessary complements, each providing information that is beneficial to the exercise of the other."

Narrative criticism demands that the modern reader has the historical information that the text assumes of its implied reader. In a basic sense, this comprises practical information that is common knowledge in the world of the story: for example, where "the island of Patmos" is located, who "Jezebel" was, what "the golden altar" was, what "Babylon" refers to, and so forth. It may also include recognition of social and political realities that lie behind the story, involving understanding of particular social customs and recognizing the meaning of culturally determined symbols or metaphors. Narrative criticism must rely on historical investigation to provide the reader with this kind of insight.

#### **2.3.5. Summary and Conclusion**

The beginning of New Testament narrative criticism can be ascribed to Auerbach (1953). Thereafter, scholars were encouraged by the narrative criticism to look at the artistry of narrative texts. Unfortunately, this approach has regarded the text as fictional, neglecting the original milieu in which these narratives were composed. In that the NT narratives are based on historical events, they definitely differ from modern (fictional) novels. On the other hand, the narrative critical approach differs from historical

criticism as well, considering the NT narrative text as final unified form.

Regarding the Apocalypse, not so many studies have been devoted to the narrative approach. However, since the apocalypse group of the Genre Project of the SBL published their results through *Semeia* 14(1979), 36(1986), some scholars like Hellholm, Boring, Du Rand, Resseguie and Barr have developed the study of the Apocalypse as a narrative. Hellholm (1982) proposes two necessary and complementary steps in text analysis: (1) division of the text into (hierarchical) communication levels, and (2) division of the text into text-sequences. In his discussion on the narrative Christology of the Apocalypse, Boring (1992) points out the useful fact that the Apocalypse has four different levels of narrativity. Du Rand (1997), in line with Boring, made a new attempt to study the theology in the Apocalypse as a narrative mode, saying that “theology is the primary unifying thread in the narrative of the Apocalypse,” its scheme emerging clearly in the formal structure of the narrative. Resseguie (1998) applied the modern narrative theories to the Apocalypse, to reveal the theology of the book. Barr (2000a) tried to show that the book is designed to shape the imagination of the hearer, who, on hearing the text in the ritual context, would experience its transforming power.

The study of the above-mentioned scholars reveals broad common ground to understand John's narrative but each of them, in my opinion, also makes a special contribution towards the understanding of the book. Briefly speaking, Hellholm (1982) succeed in proving that John's narrative consists of various levels (syntactical approach). Boring (1992) and Du Rand (1997) using the narrative levels and Resseguie (1998) using modern narrative theories manage to reveal the theology that John tried to communicate through his work (semantic approach). Barr (2000a), together with the important studies of the social function of the Book by Fiorenza (1985), Collins (1984), and Gager (1983), endeavored to discover the function of John's imaginary narrative to transform the hearers (functional approach). As I discuss a form, a content, and a function of the Apocalypse, I am indebted to the studies of the scholars above.

An important goal of this research is to reveal the theology (content) and the rhetorical

effect on the reader (function) concealed in the structure of the Apocalypse as having narrative form. For this purpose, in the first part of Chapter Three, I will suggest the relevant principles to find the structure of the Apocalypse and in the latter part of Chapter Three, I will attempt to uncover the narratological elements which influence the Apocalypse: that is, (1) the story elements, (2) discourse patterns, (3) oral techniques, (4) rhetorical skills. Thereafter in Chapter Four, I will identify the structure of the Apocalypse on different narrative unit levels and, in Chapter Five, try to bear out the relation between the narrative form and the theology of the book. In Chapter Six, I will deal with the function of the book, by showing how rhetorically the author uses the narrative qualities and the narrative structure to persuade the reader of his theological credo.



## **Chapter Three: Methodology of Narrative Structural Analysis**

### **3.1. General**

In the previous chapter, I briefly surveyed the history of the study of structure of the Apocalypse of John and the history of the New Testament narrative criticism. Now I will propose my principle to establish a new structure of the Apocalypse through a narratological perspective. As implied in the previous chapter, a narrative analysis of the Apocalypse needs a four-way approach: semantic, syntactic, communicative and functional, which will be related to the contents (theology), forms (coherence), communication (orality) and rhetorical effects (function) of the Apocalypse respectively. This is due to the fact that the Apocalypse has a narrative structure (form), cohering and unifying what the author wanted to say - the author's theology (content), which was often delivered by reading in the presence of the worshipper (orality), and then created a rhetorical effect on the reader (function). This postulation will be justified by using the narrative diagram in connection with the methodology to establish a narrative structure.

#### **3.1.1. No Content without Form**

The term "content" commonly refers to what is said in a literary work, as opposed to how it is said (that is, to the form or style). Distinctions between form and content are necessarily abstractions made for the sake of analysis, since in any actual work there can be no content that has not in some way been formed, and no purely empty form without content (Baldick 1990:44). The indivisibility of form and content is something of a critical truism.

According to Du Rand (1997:59-60), the author's theology is primarily the unifying factor in the narrative of the Apocalypse. The theologically oriented narrative scheme shows up clearly in the formal structure of the book. The understanding of history as God's story not only implies a certain plot but also implies form and content inseparable from each other. Through a particular reinforced understanding of God and Christ, the

narrative of the Apocalypse is planned to influence the suffering readers in their historical situation.

### 3.1.2. Macrostructures and Superstructures

A discourse expresses a macrostructure, which is organized by a narrative schema. A narrative schema, therefore, is not the same as the global content of a story but merely the schematic structure<sup>1</sup> that organizes this global content. Hence, macrostructures and superstructures should be carefully distinguished.

Superstructure	Macrostructure
Schematic structure	Semantic structure
Syntactic nature	Thematic nature
Text-sequence	The author's theology

Macrostructures: Global Structures with Semantic Nature.

According to Van Dijk (1980), macrostructures define higher-level or global meaning derived from lower-level meanings by way of their deletion, generalization or construction, which may imply or make new meaning.<sup>2</sup> In general, macrostructures have an essential semantic function. They are often designated as *theme*, *topic*, *gist*, *upshot* or *point* to characterize the discourse as a whole.<sup>3</sup> The notion of macrostructure appears to play a role in the explanation of many phenomena of discourse, such as coherence, thematization, relevance assignment, and global planning and interpretation.

Macrostructures have other essential functions in complex (micro)-information processing. According to Van Dijk (1980), the first one is to “organize” complex information. Without macrostructures we would not be able to form larger blocks from a

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. the narrative structure of a story; the argumentative structure of lecture; the schematic structure of a research paper etc.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., meaning that is not a property of the individual constitutive parts.

<sup>3</sup> e.g., when one tries to deliver the point of another's talks: “I don't know remember exactly what he said, but his point was ...,” the point intuitively associated with the more relevant, important, or crucial aspect of what was said, disregarding the detail.

large number of links between information units at the local level. Due to their semantic organizing role, discourses are planned and understood as coherent wholes. The second one is to “reduce” complex information. The reduction of complex information is often required when we try to withdraw the more important, relevant, abstract, or general information from a complex information unit.

The organizational and reductional functions of macrostructures may have a number of correlated functions. Macrostructures as such adequately allow the various uses of information: recall, recognition, question answering, problem solving, summarizing, paraphrasing, and so on.

Superstructures: Global Structures with Syntactic (Schematic) Nature.



Fig. 1

Besides these semantic global structures we can also think of other global structures of discourse that have a more schematic nature. Here it is not a global meaning but rather a global schema that is involved, a schema that may be used to order the global meanings of the discourse. Notions such as *outline*, *construction*, *order* or *build-up* are included in such a schema.

To organize the global meaning of a text in a given context, schematic structures of texts may be built up in terms of conventional categories such as introduction, setting, background, development, and conclusion. Examples of such global “forms” of texts are the narrative structure of a story, the argumentative structure of a lecture, or the schematic structure of a research paper. A narrative, as a typical example of such a



schematic superstructure, consists of five narrative categories: “setting,” “complication,” “resolution,” “evaluation” and “pragmatic moral” as in Fig. 1 (Van Dijk 1980:115).

### **3.1.3. Ambiguity between Signified and Signifier**

#### ***3.1.3.1. Text as Abbreviation***

According to Hellholm ([1982] 1986:13-15), texts are abbreviations; in other words, by omitting, they simplify what is to be described. He illustrates such complex signs as texts by using a simple sign like “chair.” When someone asks you “Do you have any chair in this room,” he uses the general concept “chair” in communication because he doesn’t know what kind of chair you have yet. When he uses the concept “chair,” a number of characteristics of your chair are not mentioned: its shape, color, size, material and so on. Such characteristics are of no concern to the concept “chair.” The concept “chair” contains “less distinctive and/or more general characteristics” compared with what is peculiar to each existing chair – e.g., consisting of only such characteristics as solid material, raised above the ground, to sit on, for one person, with a back. Thus the concept “chair” must be counted as more abstract than the original. Here Hellholm’s statement should be recalled that “the use of concepts is the very reason why language can function at all, that is, why we can communicate with one another and with generations past” (1986:13).

#### ***3.1.3.2. Ambiguity and Context (“historical-rhetorical situation”)***

We need to take note of ambiguity or indeterminacy of language which refers to openness to different interpretations; or an instance in which some use of language may be understood in diverse ways. Ambiguity, sometimes known as “pluresignation” or “multiple meaning,” became a central concept in the interpretation of poetry after Empson ([1930] 1970), defended it as a source of poetic richness rather than a fault of impression. He (1930) expounds seven types of ambiguity as follows:

First-type ambiguities arise when a detail is effective in several ways at once, e.g. by comparisons with several points of likeness, antitheses with several points of difference, comparative adjectives, subdued metaphors, and extra meanings suggested by rhythm. In second-type ambiguities two or more alternative meanings are fully resolved into one. The condition for a third-type ambiguity is that two apparently unconnected meanings are given simultaneously as in the case of a pun. In fourth type ambiguity the alternative meanings combine to clarify a complicated state of mind in the author – the people in a valediction “of weeping” weeps for two reasons, because their love when they are together, which they must lose, is so valuable, and because they are “nothing” when they are apart. The fifth-type ambiguity occurs when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing or not holding it all in mind at once, so that, for instance, there is a simile which applies to nothing exactly, but lies half-way between two things when the author is moving from one to the other. In the sixth type, what is said is contradictory or irrelevant and the reader is forced to invent interpretations. The seventh type is that of full contradiction, marking a division in the author’s mind – such opposites as an important element in the Freudian analysis of dreams.<sup>4</sup>

Also in the case of the Apocalypse, many symbolic or uncertain expressions in it often produce ambiguity. However, ambiguities in language should usually be resolved by their context (“historical-rhetorical situation”). In other words, a theoretically ambiguous discourse, at the macro-level, may be unambiguous in context (Van Dijk 1977:162).

### 3.1.3.3. *The Apocalypse within a Literary and Historical Context*

#### **The literary context: The narrative writing mode**

During the era when the Apocalypse was produced, “apocalypse” had been prevailing as a “genre.” Therefore for the Apocalypse to be correctly interpreted,<sup>5</sup> it must be seen

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<sup>4</sup> The notion of what you want involves the idea that you have not got it, and this again involves the opposite defined by your context, that what you want something different in another part of your mind.

<sup>5</sup> If one reads a comedy as a tragedy, one inevitably fails to recognize its own intention, since a comedy is not drawn up to achieve an effect of tragedy but constitutes a literary product *sui generis*: “one laughs ... at the death of an innocent man in a comedy but one grieves, therefore, in a tragedy” (Hellholm



against this historical backdrop (cf. Chap. 6.2. and 6.3.). This is why the genre as information about the essential *gestalt*<sup>6</sup> characteristics of a text is eminently important for its interpretation. In other words, a genre designation “rules the – very many – possibilities of interpretation and trims them” (Hellholm [1982] 1986::39).

Before one can properly interpret any piece of literature, one must determine its genre or literary type. However, the Apocalypse seems to be a complex literary type reflecting all the traditional forms of liturgy, drama, myth, prophecy, apocalypse etc (Fiorenza 1977:356,358). It is difficult, therefore, to spell out which literary type dominated the author's thinking when he wrote the book. Considering the various aspects of the complex type genre of the Apocalypse enables us to arrive at a good outline which can serve as a basis for working towards dealing with the content or the function of the Apocalypse.

The Apocalypse is called Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rev 1.1). Before the Apocalypse was written, the term Ἀποκάλυψις (unveiling, revelation) was not applied to that genre of literature. Modern terms have been developed in genre criticism and form criticism to discuss related literary types (Snyder 1991: 440; Du Rand 1991:198).

The apocalyptic books were written during the period from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200. It is necessary to note that while significant parallels do indeed exist between the Apocalypse of John and early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic materials or noncanonical books, there are critical differences between them as well.

We can mention only a few similarities and distinctions between them as follows (cf. J.J. Collins 1979:21-59; Du Rand 1991:198-217).

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[1982] 1986:39).

<sup>6</sup> A technical term for a distinctively patterned whole which determines the nature of its parts, so that the parts are secondary. Adopting a *gestalt* view implies that the nature of *gestalt* cannot be determined by analysis of its part (since the sum of the characteristics of the parts does not equal the character of the whole). Instead, the nature of the parts must be deduced from their function within the *gestalt* (since the whole determines the function and meaning of each of its parts).



Similarities: the use of symbolism and vision, the mention of heavenly mediators of the revelation, the bizarre images, the expectation of divine judgment, the emphasis on the kingdom of God, the new heavens and earth, and the dualism of this age and the age to come.

Differences: the Apocalypse is a prophetic book (1:3; 22:7,10,18-19), while the others make no such claim; the Apocalypse is not pseudonymous (1:1; 22:8), neither is it pessimistic about God's intervention in history, differing in this way from the others; while the Apocalypse does not offer futuristic prophecies (*vaticinia ex eventu*), the other apocalypses describe the present as the future.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, the relationship between various genres can be obtained from Hellholm's hierarchical illustration of genres ([1982] 1986:30) as fig. 2.

In the case of *the Apocalypse of John* as "a single text," at "subgenre" level it belongs to *apocalypse with other-worldly journey*, at "genre" level to *apocalypses*, at "type of text" level to *revelatory writing*, and finally at the "mode of writing" level (the highest and also most comprehensive level of genre) to the *narrative*.

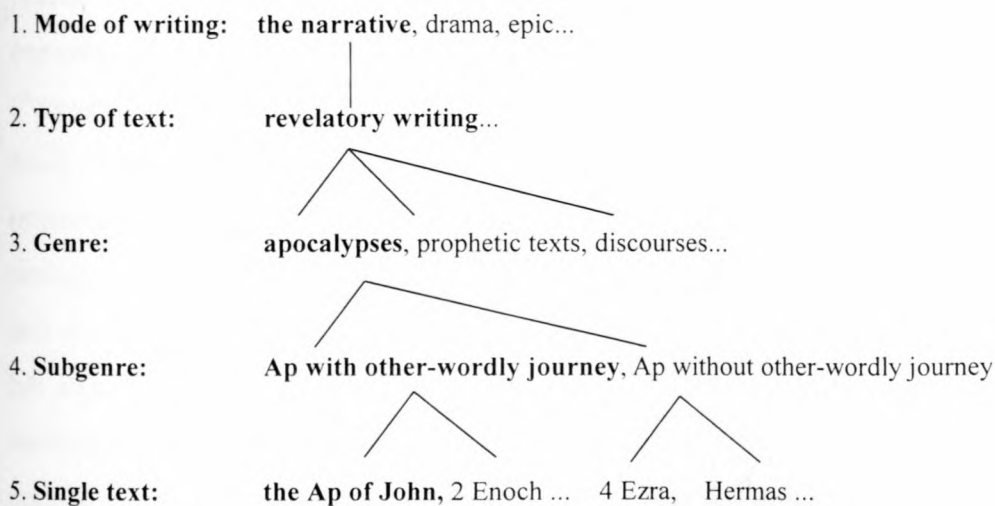


Fig. 2

<sup>7</sup> According to Du Rand (1994:209; Pate 1998:11), in the Apocalypse, the point of departure is that the end time has already begun in Jesus Christ. In other words, the author places himself in his contemporary world and speaks of the eschatological expectations that, for him, have already begun to break into history in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:4-8).

### **The external Context: The historical-rhetorical situation<sup>8</sup>**

The Apocalypse was firstly written for a specific ancient Christian community who suffering in their historical-rhetorical situation (cf. Chap. 6.2. and 6.3.). But the book, as a part of canon, is also available for the future Christian communities of all generations. Boring (1986:257,260) regarded the theology of the Apocalypse as a response to basic questions: “Who, if anyone, rules in this world?” “What, if any, is the meaning of the tragic event which comprise our history?” “If there is a good God who is in control of things, why doesn’t he do something about present evil?” The Apocalypse’s answer is “He will, for history is a unified story which is not over yet” (Court 1994:117). Thus the communal interpretation should be taken into account. A reader needs to understand the Apocalypse within the Christian community which is in a continuum of history, so that the reader can decide his/her present action in the light of the story of the Christian faith community and the vision of God’s Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us.

#### **3.1.4. Important Elements of Narrative**

The process from the creation of the Apocalypse by the author to the rhetorical effect on reader must be as follows: (1) The author notes the suffering that the Christian community experiences in the historical situation of the first century in Asia minor (“context”). (2) When he wants to encourage or challenge them theologically, he uses basic story elements – characters, events, settings – which express the theologically important events (e.g., Christ’s laying down his life for his people; He rules the world, sitting on the throne with God the Almighty; the prophetic vision of the kingdom of God and so on (“contents” constituting the Apocalypse)). (3) He arranges story elements in his own way to achieve a certain effect (“form” giving narrative coherence). (4) The writing, the Apocalypse, would be orally delivered to the audience during the worship service (“speech” delivering a message). (5) When the audience hears the Apocalypse and realizes the author’s theological intention, a certain reaction from the audience can be expected (“function”).

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail, see Chapters 6.2.1. and 6.3.

Therefore, when we analyze a narrative structure, we have to take into consideration the following narrative elements in four steps: (1) the basic theological elements of which the story consists (semantic aspect), (2) narrative strategies cohering the text all the way through (syntactic aspect), (3) oral elements used in delivering the narrative (communicational aspect), (4) rhetorical elements effecting the audience (functional aspect). They are dealt with separately for the purpose of analysis, although they are inseparable.

This general idea above should be justified by “narrative paradigm,” an important principle of analyzing a narrative content.

3.2. Narrative Paradigm

3.2.1. The Narrative Paradigm as a Model for Narrative Analysis

For the practical purposes of narrative analysis and interpretation, the narrative paradigm draws on the theories developed in Du Rand ([1978] 1980). If narrative is indeed semiotic – that is, communicates meaning in its own right, the Apocalypse as a narrative is to be seen in a communication model as the message, as mediation between author and readers (Petersen 1978:33-34).

	Expression (Means)	Content (Message)
Substance (Context)	A substance of Expression Contextual means	A substance of Content Contextual message
Form (Text)	A form of Expression Textual Means	A form of Content Textual Message

Fig. 3. Narrative Paradigm

The narrative paradigm is a theoretical model for the analysis of all narratives. The narrative paradigm plane is intersected by form (text), substance (context), content (message), and expression (means). The intersection of these four elements yields the form of content (textual message), the form of expression (textual means), the substance



of content (contextual message), and the substance of expression (contextual means) as the four areas of narrative elements like Fig. 3.<sup>9</sup>

Contents (messages) are what are transmitted in narrative communication, and expressions are the ways in which contents (messages) are transmitted. The form (text) of content and of expression implies a narrative substance (context) consisting of the substance of content and of expression of authorial-audience communication.

This paradigm has the advantage of not only concentrating in a text-immanent manner simply on the textural means and message, but also being open to the role of the context. Fig. 4 represents the narrative paradigm redrawn to accommodate the above descriptions and divisions and assumes redrawing in corresponding detail for narrative analysis.

	Expression (Means)	Content (Message)
Substance (Context)	A substance of Expression Contextual means ----- Media insofar as they can communicate stories (Media are semiotic systems in their own right). ----- Written marks or Oral sound	A substance of Content Contextual message ----- Representations of objects & actions in real & imagined worlds that can be imitated in a narrative medium. ----- Cultural & Literary codes
Form (Text)	A form of Expression Textual Means ----- Structure of narrative transmission consisting of elements shared by narratives in any medium whatsoever. ----- Discourse	A form of Content Textual Message ----- Characters, Events, Settings  ----- Story

Fig. 4. Narrative Paradigm

**3.2.2. The Important Elements in the Analysis of the Apocalypse’s Structure from the Narrative Paradigm.**

The questions asked in narrative analysis correspond exactly with the four areas of

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Chatman ([1978] 1980:22-26); Praeder(1981:270-272); Combrink (1983:66-68).

narrative elements represented in the narrative paradigm. The same is true in the analysis of the structure of the Apocalypse as shown in Fig. 5.

	Expression (Means)	Content (Message)
Substance (Context)	A substance of Expression Contextual Means -----	A substance of Content Contextual Message -----
	Context of Narration Creation +Reading -----	Context of Narrative World Historical facts, Prophetic visions, Eschatology, etc. -----
	Written marks or Oral sound	Apocalypticism
Form (Text)	A form of Expression Textual Means -----	A form of Content Textual Message -----
	Narration, Narrator, Narratee, Narrative Patterns, Plot, Point of View -----	Characters, Events, Settings, Chronological Sequence -----
	Discourse	Story

Fig. 5. Four Elements of Narrative applied to the Analysis of Structure

Now we are to consider the elements from the narrative paradigm, which can influence the analysis of the Apocalypse structure.

3.2.2.1. *The Important Elements in “Form of Content” (or “Story”)*

The basic components of a narrative story constitutes events, existences (characters & settings), and their connections.

Which are the narrative elements composing the story and what are their roles in analyzing the structure?

“Story” refers to the content of the narrative; what it is about. The story of a narrative is made up not only of “characters” and “events,” but also of “settings” and the interaction of these elements comprises what we call the plot.

“Events” have been defined as the incidents that occur throughout a story and the “plot”

as the peculiar temporal and causal sequence according to which the author has so arranged the events as to elicit from the reader some desired response (Kingsbury 1988:3). A “setting” is the place or time or social circumstances in which a character acts (:30). Settings, then, are temporal, geographical, or social in nature and serve to “set off the character” (Du Rand [1978] 1980:138). Settings serve a variety of functions. They may be symbolic. They may help to reveal characters, determine conflict, or provide structure for the story (Rhoads & Michie 1982:63). Chatman notes that a chief function of settings is “to contribute to the mood of the narrative” (:141). Within the context of the story, particular times and places are of no little significance in establishing its structure.

Characters and events are like two riders on a seesaw: movement at either end affects the other and it is the interaction of both that makes the plot work (Perrine 1974:67). In the case of the Apocalypse, Jesus, more than any other character or group of characters, influences the plot, or flow. This plot has a beginning, middle, and artful ending.

What is meant practically by saying that narrative is a meaningful structure all by itself? Exactly three “signifieds” (events, characters, and settings) are being represented by the “signifiers” (any action, any person, any place) in the narrative statement. Any action, regardless of physical or mental, stands for events, any person for characters,<sup>10</sup> and any place for settings. It is justified to argue that narrative structure bestows meanings exactly because, by utilizing the “signifiers,” it can prove that an otherwise meaningless ur-text has eventhood, characterhood, and settinghood ([1978] 1980:24-25).

### 3.2.2.2. *The Important Elements in “Form of Expression” (or “Discourse”)*

Discourse refers to the principle unifying a narrative, how the story is told. A story can be told in ways that may produce very different narratives, even if they use the same basic events, characters, and settings – e.g. the synoptic Gospels.

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<sup>10</sup> any entity that can be personalized – e.g. the Lamb, the beast, the dragon in the Apocalypse.



The elements of narrative discourse (the structure of narrative transmission) are shared by narratives in any medium whatsoever.

What are the elements used in the discourse of the narrative and what are their roles in analyzing the structure?

The discourse of the Apocalypse as a narrative encompasses such matters as the “implied author” and the “narrator,” the “point of view” espoused by the narrator or any character, and the “implied reader.” It also includes the kind and style of language used to tell the story. However, as we try to analyze the Apocalypse’s structure such as topics as *point of view*, *temporality*, and *patterns of narrative*, among others, should be considered.

#### (1) Point of View

To avoid misreading, it is necessary that one should identify the implied author’s point of view. Martin (1986:124) tries to include all aspects of the narrator’s stance in his definition of “point of view” – *distance*, both intimate and remote, according to “variations in the amount of detail and consciousness presented, *perspective* according to whose eyes we see through - namely the angle of vision or focus.”<sup>11</sup> Abrams (1999:231) defines point of view as the way the narrative is presented (or the mode established by an author) by means of characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events. According to Barr (1998:26-27), point of view means through whose eyes does our perception of events come – that is, it comprehends the values, interest, or ideology of the one whose experience and convictions focus the story.

Resseguie (1998:2) finds that studies on point of view have focused in the past on two modes of narration: first-person narration and third person narration.<sup>12</sup> More recent

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<sup>11</sup> The French call this *voice* – “identity, position of the narrator”(Martin 1986:124).

<sup>12</sup> In first-person narration the narrator speaks as “I,” and participates in the narrative. John adopts a first-person mode of narration, communicating what he sees, hears, and feels to readers. “I was in the

studies on point of view, like Uspensky (1973) and Lanser (1981), emphasize the narrator's stance with regard to space, time and ideology, rather than the mode of narrative.

Uspensky (1973) identifies five separate planes on which point of view is expected, namely, phraseological, spatial, temporal, psychological, and ideological:

- (a) The phraseological point of view is found in the level of words, phrases, and titles. What a character says and how he/she says it assists us in identifying the narrative perspective.
- (b)(c) The spatial and temporal point of view is the perspective in terms of space and time from which the author examines the actions, setting, persons, and events.
- (d) The psychological point of view presents the thoughts and feelings of characters – their perplex, fears, cry, joy, praises and so on - disclosed through narrative comments or their own speech.
- (e) Finally, the ideological point of view refers to the beliefs and values that shape the work, and which the narrator wants the reader to adopt. Located beneath the surface of the narrative, that is, embedded in the four other planes, this perspective represents the author's value, norm, attitude and general worldview.

Resseguie (1998:2) states that once the narrator's stance is understood, i.e., his/her attitude, norms, values, and beliefs, it is easier to realize the response that is desired in the reader.

The Uspensky's five planes, on which the implied author's view is expressed, will be briefly applied to the Apocalypse while trying to identify the theology of John's narrative in Chapter five.

## (2) Narrative Temporality (Time Distortion): Order, Duration, and Frequency<sup>13</sup>

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spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet" (1:10); "then I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1). In third-person narration the narrator remains outside the story, and refers to the characters by name or as "he," "she," or "they."

<sup>13</sup> Many literary scholars like especially Genette (1980:33-160), Barr (2000), Martin (1986:123-6), Weinrich (1964) and Tomashevsky (1925) explain these well.



It is important to understand how these temporal anomalies shape the story. In the Apocalypse, the continually iterative end and the lack of clear causal sequence suggest that there are some unusual features in relation to the use of time in the narrative. Narrative critics regularly look at three types of temporal distortion: order, duration, and frequency.

The story is not separate from its narration, but story and narrative are not identical. In this regard, Loughlin (1996:62) rightly points out the difference between story time and narrative time in respect of their three temporal components – order, duration, and frequency – which can differ. A (biblical) story can be told in different tempo. For example, the narrative might not include every part of the story: Sometimes a part of the story is omitted, ellipsed or suspended temporarily,<sup>14</sup> while other parts are repeated as the story continues.

#### Order: flashback and flashforward

Barr (2000:6) suggests four possibilities with relation to “order”: firstly, events can be narrated in linear order (chronological order); secondly, the author leaps ahead to tell what will happen later (flashforward or prolepsis); thirdly, the author leaps backward to recall what happened before (flashback or analepsis); finally, one may occasionally find an incident whose chronological relation to other incidents is ambiguous and impossible to specify (achrony).<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, modern narratologists invented the term *diegesis* to classify “the narrated story” as a category distinct from that of the narration according to their relation (in time or nature) with the main narrative. Martin (1986:124) subdivides the events (recalled or anticipated) into four categories: “They may lie within the time period of the main narrative (*internal* analepsis, prolepsis); outside it (*external*, as when the narrator recounts something that happened before the beginning of the story); The incidents may or may not be part of the main story line (*homo-* or *hetero-diegetic*).” On

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps laws, proverbs, psalms and songs may belong to the narrative “pauses” (Loughlin 1996:62).

<sup>15</sup> Martin (1986:125) gives a good example of memory where the achrony easily occurs: “When we enter a character’s memory, the ordering can become complex, since reminiscence about an earlier period may evoke thoughts of still earlier ones, and references to the narrative ‘present’ will be flash forwards within memory.”



the other hand, Baldick (1990:57) classifies it into three levels: “the *diegetic* level of a narrative is that of the main story, whereas the ‘higher’ level at which the story is told is *extradiegetic* (i.e., standing outside the sphere of the main story). An embedded tale-within-the-tale constitutes a lower level known as *hypodiegetic*.”

John’s narrative are filled with analepses and prolepses which permeate every segment of John’s story. The story of “the birth of Jesus” in chapter 12 as well as the account of Jesus’ salvific action on the cross and John’s testimony of Jesus before his banishment to the island “Patmos” (implied in chapter one) are outside the main narrative (external analepsis), while many interventions by the heavenly world (e.g., chapter seven) seem to be *heterodiegetic* from the point of view of one plot line turning on the earthly event but in the dual plot line (which progresses from the dynamic correlation between the earthly world and the heavenly world) they appear as *homo-diegetic*. In the meantime, the realistic part of the narrative (1:1 - 8 and 22:6 - 21) can be said to constitute “*extradiegetic*” level, the main visionary story (1:9 - 22:5) can be represent as “*diegetic*” level, and embedded episodes within the main visionary part of the Apocalypse can be defined as “*hypodiegetic*” level.

### Duration

This refers to the temporal ratio between the time an incident would take to occur and the time taken to tell about it.

(a) *The scene* would be that the time period described and reading time are about equal e.g., a dialogue.

(b) *The stretch* (or slow motion) takes place when the telling takes longer than the occurrence, often because of extensive description. Narrated time stops, in a sense, in passages of commentary and description.

(c) *The summary* is told much more briefly than events would occur. That is, “in summary, reading time may be much shorter than chronological time (e.g., ‘year passed’). Some temporal periods may be left out (ellipsis)” (Martin 1986:124).

For example: Chapter four as a whole is just the detailed description of the heavenly court, in which virtually nothing happens. In this way, the actions heavy with

description move very slowly like a slow motion shot. On the other hand, seals one (6:1-2), two (6:3-4), and four (6:7-8) are typical of summary; seals three (6:5-6), five (6:9-11), and six (6:12-17) represent scene; seal seven (8:1) can be said to be summarized (cf. Barr 2000:6).

### Frequency

Frequency can be defined as the number of times an incident is recounted. A narrative may treat its incidents as singulative or unique (each narrated only once) or repetitive (a single event may be described several times), repetitious (similar incidents repeatedly narrated), or iterative (one description of an event occurs repeatedly). Repeated occurrence of the same event may be described once (iterative – e.g., “he saw her every day”).

Barr (2000:6) argues that frequency is much used in the Apocalypse, giving some good examples, in particular, of both repetition and repetitiousness: at least five narrative enactments of the final battle, and perhaps a half-dozen depictions of the fall of Babylon prove to be repetitive, while the seven bowls are repetitious of the seven trumpets. And he (:6) rightly points out that “such redundancy eliminates the possibility of any direct correlation between the events of the Apocalypse and the events of history and obviates any need to make these events fit on a simple linear sequence.”

### (3) Various Narrative Patterns

What kind of narrative patterns are used in the reporting of this story, or in structuring a passage and its immediate context? The implied author may direct the reader in understanding the text through the use of “narrative patterns.” Such patterns tend to be difficult to define. Narrative critics, however, have tried to discern literary principles which organize the work. As a result, a wealth of information is already available on this important aspect of literary study. Among others, Bauer’s proposal (1988:13-20) is widely accepted. Fifteen kinds of literary patterns are, he argues, found in biblical narratives: “Repetition,” “Contrast,” “Comparison,” “Causation and Substantiation,” “Climax,” “Pivot,” “Particularization and Generalization,” “Statements of purpose,”



“Preparation,” “Summarization,” “Interrogation,” “Inclusio,” “Interchange,” “Chiasm,” and “Intercalation.”<sup>16</sup>

These patterns can appear in the narrative units of various sizes and lengths, from individual sentences to paragraphs or entire books because they are inherent in the art of storytelling. Bauer (1988) states that these types of relationships also are found in music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, let alone other genres of literature. Narrative writers decide how to organize and arrange the material and so the reader’s apprehension inevitably depends on these decisions.

### 3.2.2.3. *The Important Elements in “Substance of Expression” (or “Orality”)*

Units of the expression plane convey meanings, that is, units of the content plane. In languages, the substance of expression is the material manifestation - for example, the actual sounds made by voices, or marks on paper.

#### **What are the oral techniques used in delivering the story and what are their roles in analyzing the structure?**

Ancient writings were intended to be heard. For the ancients, speech gave life to words. Therefore in the oral tradition all written texts, including New Testament books, should

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<sup>16</sup> “Repetition” involves a recurrence of similar or identical elements.  
 “Contrast” associates or juxtaposes things that are dissimilar or opposite.  
 “Comparison” associates or juxtaposes things that are alike or similar.  
 “Causation and Substantiation” order the narrative through relationships of cause and effect (causation is the movement from cause to effect and substantiation, from effect to cause.)  
 “Climax” represents a movement from lesser to greater intensity.  
 “Pivot” involves a change in the direction of the material, either from positive developments to negative ones or vice versa.  
 “Particularization and Generalization” involve movement in the text toward explication that becomes either more specific or more comprehensive.  
 “Statements of purpose” structure the narrative according to a movement from means to end.  
 “Preparation” refers to the inclusion of material in one part of the narrative that serves primarily to notify the reader of what is still to come.  
 “Summarization” offers a synopsis or abridgement of material that is treated more fully elsewhere.  
 “Interrogation” is the employment of a question or problem followed by its answer or solution.  
 “Inclusio” refers to a repetition of features at the beginning and end of a unit, as exemplified by the use of antiphons in Liturgical poetry (cf. Ps. 8:1, 9).  
 “Interchange” involves an alternation of elements in an “a, b, a, b” pattern.  
 “Chiasm” has to do with a repetition of elements in an inverted order: “a, b, b, a”  
 “Intercalation” refers to the insertion of one literary unit in the midst of another.



be spoken. This is because the literary conventions were designed for the ear in the ancient (oral-oriented) world, while they are meant for the eye in our modern (print-oriented) world. It is important to realize that the essential structure of the book must have been designed to reveal itself in oral performance. In such a text, the structure must be distinguished by sound markers (cf. Barr 1986:243-56). In other words, ancient authors did not have our modern methods of delineating the structure or composition of their works by way of clear marks such as chapter headings, titles, etc. Instead they only left us with some clues which would have to be discovered within the text itself.

### **The liturgical context as the oral setting of the Apocalypse**

The assumption of the work was that a reciter stood before the community in the place of John, who himself was confined to Patmos (1:3,9). This work was surely intended for repeated performances. Many scholars posit that the Apocalypse may have been performed in a liturgical context. Certainly, this would be the most likely reason for an audience to assemble to hear such a book. Furthermore, the depiction of scenes of worship and the usage of extensive liturgical language in the book emphasize this likelihood (cf. Barr 1986:252).

### **The orality of the Apocalypse as an essential element in its interpretation**

The oral presentation of the Apocalypse within the liturgy leads the hearers to enter another universe in which they can experience the realization of God's rule. In this regard, Barr (1986: 256) says that it becomes a charter story that establishes a new world in which God is victorious over evil through Jesus' salvation and judgment. The very enactment of the Apocalypse establishes that kingdom in this world, so that His kingdom can be equated to His true worship.

The original audience encountered it as an oral experience (1:3), and that experience determined both the way the Apocalypse is structured and the meaning the audience found in it. Thus the orality of the Apocalypse must be an essential aspect of its hermeneutic.

### **"Seeing by Ear" in the ancient world**

The world of print and the oral world must be configured very differently. What kinds of devices orient us to communication in the biblical world? The oral world literature used conventional *sound markers* to plot the movement and the progress of its compositions. Hearing was “as normal to the populations of the Levant two thousand years ago as private, silent reading is to us. Where we, for the most part, negotiate our world through visual clues, the biblical world utilized sound and its repetitions to create a grammar of orientation” (Wilson 1997: 35).

### **The ancient world directed to orality**

Through the biblical era, writing had developed only minimal punctuation which was largely confined to paragraph breaks.<sup>17</sup> It had no separation of words. It is very similar to the way even we produce speech. Let Rev 1:19 be an example:

Modern style: “Write therefore what you have seen what is now and what will take place”

Ancient style: “Writethereforewhatyouhaveseenwhatishnowandwhatwilltakeplace”

The idea of separating the words must have seemed as odd to the ancients as its contrary does to us. “The idea of words as separate entities tends to be an intellectual barrier in many oral cultures” (:36).<sup>18</sup>

In addition, we must mention the improvisational nature of oral performance. Every performance was a fresh composition, so that the idea of a fixed (or original) text was an alien idea to both the performer and the listener in the ancient world. No doubt the ancient hearing-oriented society expected variedly fluid performances of the same tales, which encouraged early writers to edit and revise their sources freely (:36).

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<sup>17</sup> Modern chapter numbers can be traced back to Stephen Langton who divided the whole Bible sometime between 1206 and 1231 (Loewe 1969:146-8). The verse divisions used today was devised by Robert Stephanus of Paris around 1551. No one has been able to fathom a system behind Stephanus’ method of versification (Von Soden 1911:482ff).

<sup>18</sup> Wilson (1997:36) gives as an example the case of Serbo-Croatian epic poets in the former Yugoslavia: They did not understand the concept of a “word.” Their thought was drawn from a huge catalogue of stock phrases in the memory to be expressed in a stream of sound, and the syllables had to be arranged in the very act of performance.



### **The oral techniques (or “sound markers”)**

Modern narratives obey strict linearity in their presentation. Differently from a modern text subjected to linear flow, an ancient text, “episodically designed,” was generally designed to refresh the memory or ponder an idea. Thus various familiar sound markers allowed the ancient hearer to do just that. These markers allowed listeners to follow the progress of a performance within a conventional framework, and let them notice a change in the development of plot. Therefore markers were used as both structural boundary signs and mnemonic aids. Gray (1971:289-303) mentions that a primary concern of oral literature is the ease with which it can be remembered by the audience. Thus repetitive patterns were often used in ancient literature, because they build a structure to assist the memory of an aurally dependent audience, in the place of paragraph and chapter markers in modern texts.

#### **3.2.2.4. *The Rhetorical Elements in “Substance of Content” (or “historical context”)***

According to Chatman ([1978] 1980:22-23), the substance of content is the set of possible objects, events, abstractions, and so on that can be “imitated” by an author. Various objects & actions represented in real & imagined worlds - people, things, etc.- can be imitated in a narrative medium, as filtered through the author’s cultural codes. Moreover, the substance of content can be the whole mass of thoughts and emotions common to mankind, independent of the language they speak. Now each language (reflecting its culture) divides up these mental experiences in different ways.

On the other hand, According to Du Rand (1994:198),

the term “apocalypticism”<sup>19</sup> denotes a historical movement, occurring in Apocalyptic groups. “It describes the thought system of a community” which accords with a thought system which has apocalyptic thought content as a basis. It deals with the conviction that God reveals secrets about the limitations of this world, the existence of another world and the coming of the end.

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<sup>19</sup> Most modern scholars distinguish between Apocalypses (a group of texts) and Apocalypticism (a system of ideas) and avoid the vague use of the adjective “Apocalyptic” as a noun.



Then, especially in the case of the Apocalypse, apocalypticism could have been the most primary mental experience in the Christian community of Asia Minor to whom the author wrote. So the receiver's context ("historical situation") probably was apocalypticism among the Christian community of the first century Asia Minor. As a result, when an apocalyptic narrative was delivered to such a suffering audience, it would have evoked such rhetorical effect to persuade them to reflect on their identity or act upon their situation.

### **What were the rhetorical elements used in order to persuade people in a particular context ("Apocalypticism")?**

Du Rand (1994:310-316) points out that a narrative analysis of the Apocalypse is based on the view that its message can be regarded as functional. Then its function would include a psychological, a sociological and, more importantly, a theological experience for the receiver.<sup>20</sup> In a specific situation, this offers the receiver a message to which he/she can be committed and from which he/she ought to live. Furthermore, in a crisis, he/she could have experienced a catharsis.

### **The author's theology as a powerful rhetorical device**

The stories of the Bible are an indispensable source of life and vitality for faith. Culpepper (1983) holds that, for most Christians, the indispensable source of life and vitality for faith is neither a tentative historical reconstruction nor a statement of scripturally derived doctrinal principles. Rather, the sources are the stories of the Bible themselves to be remembered, treasured, and interpreted within their narrative form: for instance, the themes of Biblical apocalyptic stories may proclaim "God the Almighty still rules over the world," "God will save and vindicate us in the end," "God will destroy evil," "God establish a new world for the faithful" and so on.

The creation of a narrative world is a powerful rhetorical device because, in the

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<sup>20</sup> In the case of the Apocalypse, we can find that the rhetorical symbolic world of the Apocalypse contains (i) the social function that the readers are motivated to strengthen their identity and to remain faithful to God and the Lamb, (ii) the psychological effect that the fears and grievances of the reader are rhetorically purified and (iii) the reconstruction of faith that the Lamb has conquered, and the oppressed will be victors on the grounds of what God has accomplished through the salvation and judgment of Jesus Christ.

narrative, God's ultimate point of view will be accepted as normative. It gives significant direction to the reader's interpretation of the story; the implied reader will tend to empathize with those characters who represent God's point of view and will seek to distance themselves from those characters who do not. Thus, in the process of telling these stories, the implied authors provide standards that govern the interpretation.

**The main assertion of narrative theologians has been that biblical stories have power to transform people and world.**

According to Powell (1990:85-91), there is increasing appreciation among scholars today of the ability of stories to engage us and to change the way we perceive ourselves and our world. What is it that makes stories so infectious? The narrative form itself corresponds in some profound way to reality and thus enables us to translate our experience of the story world into our own situation.

As a narrative, the Apocalypse has the power to take us into a new world. As an enacted narrative, the Apocalypse has the power to bring into existence the ideal reality which it portrays. When one reads the book, one temporarily leaves one's own reality and enters into a symbolic world that is autonomous in its own right. This symbolic world, which possesses its own time and space, is peopled by characters and marked by events in accordance with this world's own system of values. "By inhabiting this symbolic world one experiences it, one leaves and returns, perhaps changed, to one's own world" (Uspensky 1973:137).<sup>21</sup>

**The relationship between theological content and the narrative structure**

John's theological scheme show up clearly in the structure of the book because the author's theology probably is the primary principles unifying the narrative of the Apocalypse (cf. Du Rand 1997:59-60). However, the flow of the theological narrative is not the same as that of the story. Here we must take note that a big difference exists between a modern linear plot and the ancient episodic flow of narrative. In fact, in the

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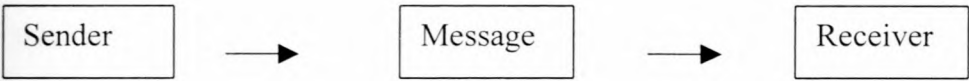
<sup>21</sup> Entering the story world of a narrative may be likened to attendance at a modern-day motion picture, an effect that may continue to make itself felt long after we leave the theater and return to the real world (Powell 1990:90).



ancient world, narratives in Scripture were largely written in an episodic way, and were often patterned after concentric or repetitive forms. However, the modern reader is more likely to read these texts through a different set of interpretive lenses, with an eye for the linear progression of narratives that one expects from modern compositions. In the meantime, the Apocalypse has its own (global, thematic) narrative flow which implies the idea that “history is God’s story.” In John’s story, this idea binds its form and content. Thus, the narrative of the Apocalypse seeks to persuade the readers through its theology, bringing about its rhetorical function.

3.3. The Communication Process

Forms of communication appear to follow the basic schematised model as below:<sup>22</sup>



The above basic elements can be expanded further to offer various theoretical communication models for a communicational analysis of the narrative text. That is, when we read the Apocalypse from the narratological perspective, we must distinguish three aspects of the story-teller of the book: the actual author, the implied author, and the narrator. The three “teller” roles correspond exactly to three “hearer” roles: the actual audience, the implied audience, the narratee. It is, thus, common to set forth these relationships as illustrated below:

**Author» [implied author »narrator » narratee » implied audience ]<sup>23</sup>» Audience**

The above illustration explains how a story is sent from the author to the reader. Accordingly, we must distinguish between *the real author and the real readers* in the process of communication and between *the implied author and the implied reader* who

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy (1984:6) argues that at the heart of a distinctive rhetoric of religion lies “authoritative proclamation” unlike other contemporary “rational persuasion.”  
<sup>23</sup> The brackets represent the boundaries of the text. The implied author and the implied audience as well as the narrator and narratee are intra-textual literary functions.



are encoded in the text. It is also important to note that *the real author and the real reader* are extra-textual entities in the historical context of the book.

### **The real author, the implied author and the narrator**

The real author writes a story, while the story projects a certain image of the author which does not necessarily agree with the identity of the real author. The implied author is the view of the author that he/she wants to show in the text, positing from the text. To put it differently, he/she can be said to be the *sum total of choices* of the original author in suggesting ideal points of view in the book. It is difficult to identify the precise relationship between the real author and the implied author.

In modern narrative theory the person we see behind *the narrator* is the author whom the real author intends us to see. This *implied author* is distinguished from *the narrator*, in that the narrator is only the voice used to deliver the story. The narrator serves as the implied author's voice, presenting the viewpoint or perspective of the implied author in the text (Culpepper 1983:16). *The narrator* is a literary device invented by the author to tell the story, so that the narrator appears to be like the author but and may not even resemble the author. In fact, the narrator is not the author, and neither is the implied author.

### **The actual reader, the implied reader and the narratee**

*The implied audience* is the *sum total* we can reconstruct of the audience from the statements in the text. The persons we deduce to be the recipients of the story are not *the actual audience*, but constitute the (implied) audience that the author intends us to see. That is, the author's picture of the audience. Like the image of *the implied author* it may be a close likeness to the actual audience, or it may be highly selective. At the very least *the implied audience* is the real audience as the author wishes us to see them; at most the implied audience could be a complete fiction with no relation to anyone in the real world (Barr 1998:52). When the author explains something, the implied reader, as a literary creation of the author, would not have understood this unless it was explained. Conversely, when a matter is not mentioned, a critic can accept that the implied reader was able to understand it. *The implied reader* can almost not be

distinguished from *the narratee*, since this is just as difficult to do as it is to distinguish *the implied author* from *the narrator*.

*The narratee* is the audience to which *the narrator* tells the story. *The narratee* is a less encompassing group than *the implied audience* of the work. *The narratee* is a literary device invented by the author to hear the story, so that the narratee appears to be like the audience but may not resemble the audience at all. In fact, the narratee is not the actual audience, and neither is the implied audience.

### 3.4. Conclusion

In their respective roles of composer and receiver, the author and audience both have their respective experiences and imaginations, which occurs through the encoding and decoding process. During this process, four different elements must be considered in the analysis of the Apocalypse's structure. Earlier, this general description of a communicative process was justified by the narrative paradigm which can be applied to any narrative analysis.

A narrative, as a message mediating between author and readers, is submitted to an encompassing narrative paradigm (or a communication model), which then should contain a "form and substance of expression," and "form and substance of content." The four different narrative elements present in the narrative diagram were dealt with earlier: the story elements, the discourse patterns, the oral elements and the rhetorical elements, which influence the structure.

Content and expression are obviously inseparable in a narrative and their interrelation is integral to the impact of a narrative. For the purpose of analysis only, I have dealt with the various elements of a narrative to be found at four planes of narrative paradigm separately, but they must be correlated with one another because of their inseparable nature. The fragmentary analysis never replaces the unitary impact of the narrative itself.

In the next chapter, I will first delimitate the text by using these elements. And I will

continue to regroup the small units into larger groups by using cohering narrative strategies until we arrive at the whole text as a single unit. In Chapter Five, I will highlight the themes of the story which will be uncovered in the macrostructure. Hereafter (Chapter Six), the focus will be on the total rhetorical impact occurring when the receivers are confronted with the author's theology (in other words, God's words). As most narrative theologians claim, this impact is highly probable, because one should not view a narrative as a mere vehicle for an idea, but as a medium to produce a certain effect in the readers. Lastly, by means of the analysis of the macrostructure of the Apocalypse, I will argue why I dare to call the Apocalypse "a Johannine version of the gospel" focusing on the results of Christ's death, the source of victory and salvation for the suffering faithful.



## Chapter Four: Narrative Structure of the Apocalypse

### 4.1. General

In this chapter, I will seek to uncover a syntactic structure of the Apocalypse as a narrative, with the reference to various structures surveyed in the Chapter 2, but also based on the four elements of narrative structural analysis described in the narrative paradigm in Chapter 3.

For this purpose, I first delimit the whole text into many small parts. However most of the small sections obtaining from this delimiting work are lack of the necessary conditions of becoming the complete narrative units yet because it is relentlessly delimited irrespective of anywhere if even one of various narrative elements changes or appears newly. In other words they are only a partial contribution to making up “complete narrative units,” because it is difficult to find the requisite for “narrative unit” such as an inverted parallelism or the inclusion in the small sections.

To avoid confusing terminology, it would be better to distinguish the small sections to be shown in 4.2.3 and the complete narrative units to be identified in 4.4. and to name the former and the latter as the “**partial** narrative units” and the “**basic** narrative units” respectively.

Generally “partial narrative parts” are short of becoming the “basic narrative unit” by itself, so that in most cases, they must be grouped together to make the self-governing (or self-contained) narrative unit – that is, the “basic narrative unit.” Then these basic narrative units will continue to be grouped into larger units until they reach the global unit, which shows the whole text as a unity. When we do grouping work, I will use various narrative (cohering) strategies.

In starting from the establishment of small narrative sections (“partial narrative unit”) and gradually proceeding to a global structure of the text, we follows the principle of

“content analysis approach” referred to in 2.1.3.2.2. However, a major weakness of this approach is that scholars using the method fail to search for enough clues for cohering “narrative units” from within the text itself. But in order to overcome the weakness of the “content analysis approach,” this study will utilize various cohering strategies in the syntactical, semantic, and functional aspect of the interrelationship among narrative units.

In summary, the following procedure will be followed to discover the structure of the narrative text.

Firstly the text as a whole is delimited into many (often incomplete) small sections by using narrative elements. It will be called “partial narrative unit.”

Secondly, several “partial narrative units” are grouped together to be self-governing or self-contained units, which are identified by using some criteria like “inverse parallelism,” or “inclusion.” It will be called “basic narrative units.”

Thirdly, basic narrative units continue to be grouped into bigger narrative units by using various cohering strategies<sup>1</sup> until we reach a “global unit” of the whole narrative.

Each of these will be dealt with in 4.2. 4.4. 4.5. respectively.

## **4.2. Delimitation of the whole text as a preparatory work**

The importance of this preparatory work has been mentioned by scholars like Kallmeyer and Meyer-Hermann (1980:251), as follows:

Text-delimitation as a phenomenon on the surface level is on the one hand an important way to recognize macrostructures in the process of reception and analysis; on the other hand it is a necessary result in realizing macrostructures as well as in using principles of textuality in the process of production (re-quoted from Hellholm

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<sup>1</sup> Where the syntactic or semantic coherence seems to be missing - e.g., either because of sudden interludes (e.g., 7:1-17; 10:1-11:14; 12:1-14:20) within, or an addendum (e.g., 17:1-22:5) to the seven visions of seals, trumpets and bowls - a high degree of pragmatic coherence must be considered (Hellholm [1982] 1986:54).

([1982] 1986:33)).

Thus delimiting the whole text into many small parts should be the preparatory work to analyze the structure of the narrative text. When a particular change in “story elements” or “story flow” takes place, it may herald the beginning of a new narrative section. However, the small sections often reveal incomplete narrative units because delimitations may occur even in the future complete narrative unit (“basic narrative unit”). Additionally, some repetitive phrases would be helpful for identifying the narrative sections, as I mentioned in “Phrase Approach (2.1.3.2.3).”

To demarcate many small sections (“partial narrative unit”) within the whole text, I will use as the delimiting makers (1) “story elements” – event/theme change, actors change, and settings change, and (2) “repetitive phrases.”

#### **4.2.1. Delimitation Markers**

##### ***4.2.1.1 Changes in Story Elements***

###### **1) Change in event/theme**

Changes in event are mainly related to the thematically changing markers. The importance of these (thematic) markers lies mainly in the fact that they serve as signals for changes between various subjects of communication and, consequently, signal different events. Moreover, in the narrative text which largely consists of episodic events and descriptive parts, shifts between them also can function as signals for the beginning and ending of new act of communication.

###### **2) Change in setting**

This marker has to do with *a change of place or time* in the narrative. When this marker appears, it could be a signal to move into a new event or part. Hellholm ([1982] 1986:38-42) points that the changes in worlds (from this-worldly to other-worldly or vice versa) are of the most striking features of the “apocalypses” along with various levels of communication.



### 3) Change in characters

This marker is concerned with changes in the main characters. Here it should be emphasized that the switch in *a group of characters* is more important than changes concerning “individual characters,” which often accompany “change in setting.” Thus, the change of “a group of characters” is a primary delimiting signal, while the “change in individuals” is secondary (Hellholm [1982] 1986:41).

#### 4.2.1.2. Repetition of Phrases

The use of a phrase as a key literary marker is a valuable approach. As long as arbitrary application is avoided, these repetitive phrases can be an important contribution to demarcate the sections of the text. According to Hellholm ([1982] 1986:42), these markers function *per se* only on micro-syntagmatic level (sentence level), delimiting sentences and textsequences. However, these signals play an important role to strengthen the delimiting function of the macro-syntagmatic level (text level).<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned earlier (2.1.3.2.3), the idea of viewing particular phrases as the signal for a new literary section or unit has appealed to many scholars like Tenney (1957). Some formulaic phrases uniformly appear at the beginning or end of a literary segment and thus are reliable indicators of the delimitation of the narrative text. Among the representative “repetitive phrases” in the Apocalypse are “in the Spirit,” “I saw” or “I hear,” “thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake” and the word “sign.”<sup>3</sup>

Firstly the phrase “in the Spirit” appears in 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; and 21:10 to demarcate four

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<sup>2</sup> Pragmatics includes semantics and syntactics, and semantics includes syntactics as well (Hellholm 1980:22ff; 1986:25-26):

Pragmatics: Relation between Signs, Designata, and Users = R (S,D,U);

Semantics: Relation between Signs and Designata = R (S,D)

Syntactics: Relation between Signs, and other Signs = R (S,S')

According to Hellholm ([1982] 1986: 40-42), “the more inclusive (pragmatic-semantic) markers....delimit macro-syntagmatic structures, while the less inclusive (syntactic) markers primarily delimit the micro-syntagmatic structures.”

<sup>3</sup> For other New Testament narrative texts this approach has yielded fruitful and interesting results. In Matthew, “... when Jesus had finished saying these things” repeatedly appears in 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1;

main sections in the Apocalypse of John. These sections or units begin at 1:9; 4:1; 17:1; and 21:9. It is worth noticing that the scene is related with geographical shifts (Patmos, heaven, a wilderness and a mountain, respectively) but also to a peculiar thematic thrust (Christ in the Church 1:9 - 3:22; Christ in the Cosmos 4:1 - 16: 21; Christ in Conquest 17:1 - 21:8; Christ in Consummation 21: 9-22:5) (Tenney 1957: 32-33).

In addition to “in the Spirit,” the phrases “I saw” and “I hear” should be noticed. A number of sections of the Apocalypse must be made up of either seeing-oriented parts or hearing-oriented parts to make the progression of the narrative, by placing them successively or alternatively to each other (e.g., 8:2-12 (beginning with “and I saw...”); 8:13 (beginning with “as I watched, I heard...”); 9:1-12 (beginning with “...and I saw”); 9:13-21 (beginning with “...and I heard”)). Thus the phrases often convey the opening of a new vision, although they sometimes show unreliability of the phrase as a sound guide to literary structure.

Besides, “thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake,” also may be significant for heralding a new section or unit. The phrase occurs four times (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). Tenney observes the use of the word “sign” in three places, 12:1, 12:3; 15:1. This, he asserts, delineates chapters 12 to 16 as a literary unit (1957:71). But the influence of these is slight or limited, applying right through the whole text, but can be great as long as they concerns – that is, chapters 4 to 16 regarding “thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake,” chapters 12 to 16 regarding “sign.”

#### **4.2.2. Constraints in Delimiting the Text**

This chapter is intended to show that John’s narrative as a whole is a coherent unit with a plot. Delimitation is just for the sake of convenience - a preparatory step (dividing) toward the next stage (cohering). Thus the following constraints need to be considered:

1. Repetitive Phrases abound.<sup>4</sup> However, this study will only utilize the above-

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26:1, and in Acts the six summary statements appear in 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30f.

<sup>4</sup> e.g., to mention only some, beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14); the Lord God Almighty (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22); the one who sits on the throne (4:9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:15; 21:5);



mentioned delimitation markers, which other critics have often used to indicate the beginnings and the ends of the narrative units of the book.

2. This delimitation could be done for (countless) smaller sections (further partial units) but such an enormous task seems to us to have little value.

3. Some basic narrative units (BNU) which many scholars have treated as *inherently complete* need not be divided further - e.g. each of the seven plague series (seal, trumpet, bowl) and each message to the seven churches in Asia Minor.

4. Our delimitation through the delimitation chart of the Apocalypse in section 4.2.3. tends to be tentative, or based on superficial or subjective observation, but it may serve as a workable criterion in identifying various turning points of John's narrative.

#### 4.2.3. Delimitation Chart of the Apocalypse

The following chart is the result obtained from applying the delimitation markers to the Apocalypse. I use the chart form to avoid a long explanation of the reasons (or "delimiting factors") applied in demarcating each section. At this stage, it should be reminded that most of the small sections (the "**partial** narrative units") in this chart are just partial, because generally each small section doesn't have enough necessary conditions to become a "complete narrative unit" in it - such as the inverted parallelism or the inclusion. Most of them are short of becoming the "**basic** narrative units (BNU or UL1)" except for several cases that a narrative partial unit can become itself as a complete narrative unit. It is because they are relentlessly delimited irrespective of anywhere if even one of various narrative elements changes. Thus in the most case, they can't make a complete basic narrative unit until several (intimately correlated) partial units are grouped together (as shown in 4.4.).

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ἐρχομαί (2:5, 16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:6, 12, 20); the Lamb occurs 28 times, seven of which are in phrases coupling God and the Lamb together (5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 14:4; 21:22; 22:1,3); the Χριστός (including occurrences of Ἰησοῦ Χριστός) occurs 7 times in the book, and the name Ἰησοῦ appears 14 times in the book, seven times in connection with μαρτυρία or μαρτυρων (1:2, 9; 12:17; 17:6; 19:10 [twice]; 20:4); προφητεία (1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19); θυσιαστηρίον (6:9; 8:3 [twice], 5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7); ἄβυσσος (9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) (cf. Bauckham 1993:18-37).



Basic Narrative Unit	Partial Narrative unit	Event (or Theme) Change	Time Change or Repetitive Phrase	Place Change	Character Change
UL1 (1:1-3)	1:1-2	Prologue: The title (1:1a) The intention (1:1b) The Transmission order of this message (1:1c-2)			
	1:3	The beatitude (1:3)			
UL1 (1:4-8)	1:4-7	Epistolary prescript: Greeting to addressee (1:4-5b) Achievement of Jesus and Doxology (1:5b-7)			
	1:8	<b>God's self-predication</b>			
UL1 (1:9—20)	1:9	<b>John's self-presentation (1:9a) and situation (1:9b)</b>		<b>The island of Patmos (1:9)</b>	John alone
	1:10a	Pneumatic enrapture (1:10a)	ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ (1:10a)	The island of Patmos	John, the Spirit, a loud voice
	1:10b-11	<b>Command to send the scroll to the seven churches</b>	καὶ ἤκουσα (1:10b)	The island of Patmos	John, the Spirit, a loud voice
	1:12-16	The features of Jesus ( <b>"One like a Son of Man"</b> )	εἶδον ἑπτὰ λυχνίας χρυσαῖς (1:12b)		John, Jesus
	1:17-19	Epiphany: John's falling at his feet (1:17a); Jesus' self-predication (1:17b-18); Command to write (1:19)	Καὶ ὅτε εἶδον αὐτόν (1:17)		Jesus, John
	1:20	His commentary (1:20)			
UL1 (2:1-7)	2:1-7	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Ephesus: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (2:1) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Ephesus: (2:2-6) 3) the promise to him who conquers (2:7) <sup>5</sup>	Τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον <sup>6</sup> (2:1)	The church in Ephesus	The church, evil men, the false prophet, the Nicolaitan
UL1 (2:8-11)	2:8-11	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Smyrna: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (2:8) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Smyrna: (2:9-10) 3) the promise to him who conquers (2:11)	Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίας γράψον (2:8)	The church in Smyrna	The church, Jews, the devil, some of the congregation
UL1 (2:12-17)	2:12-17	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Pergamum: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (2:12) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Smyrna: (2:13-16) 3) the promise to him who conquers (2:17)	Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον (2:12)	The church in Pergamum	The church, Antipas, some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitan
UL1 (2:18-29)	2:18-29	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Thyatira: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (2:18) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Smyrna: (2:19-25) 3) the promise to him who conquers (2:26-29) <sup>7</sup>	Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψον (2:18)	The church in Thyatira	The church, Jezebel, those who commit adultery with her, her children

5 Jesus' message to each church is expanded into the message to the general churches by the Spirit.

6 Here γράψον ("write") may play the same role as "I saw" or "I heard" as a demarcating marker, because John *heard* when Jesus asked him to "write what you see in a book."

7 From the church in Thyatira, the order of the promise to him who conquers and the calling ("He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches") is inverted.

UL1 (3:1-6)	3:1-6	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Sardis: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (3:1) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Smyrna: (3:2-4) 3) the promise to him who conquers (3:5-6)	Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἐκκλησίας γράψον (3:1)	The church in Sardis	The church, people who have not soiled their garments
UL1 (3:7-13)	3:7-13	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Philadelphia: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (3:7) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Philadelphia: (3:8-11) 3) the promise to him who conquers (3:12-13)	Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Φιλαδελφείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον (3:7)	The church in Philadelphia	The church, (some) of the synagogue of Satan
UL1 (3:14-22)	3:14-22	<b>The letter</b> to the church in Laodicea: 1) the feature of "Jesus" (3:14) 2) Jesus' message to the church in Laodicea: (3:15-20) 3) the promise to him who conquers (3:21-22)	Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον (3:14)	The church in Laodicea	The church
UL1 (4:1-11)	4:1	<b>The open door</b> in heaven (4:1)	Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον (4:1)	earth	John, Jesus (4:1)
	4:2a	<b>Pneumatic rapture</b> (4:2a)	ἐν πνεύματι (4:2a)	heaven	John, the Spirit (4:2a)
	4:2b-11	The Throne and One seated on the throne and: The throne and Supreme divinity (4:2b-3), the heavenly beings before the throne (4:4-7) and their praising (4:8-11)		<b>The heavenly court</b> (4:2b)	God, 24 elders, the seven spirits of God, four living creatures (4:3-11)
UL1 (5:1-14)	5:1	<b>"Heavenly Scroll":</b> Scroll written within and on the back, and sealed	Καὶ εἶδον (5:1)	The heavenly court	John, God
	5:2-5	Who is worthy to open the scroll? A strong angel's proclaiming (5:2) John's weeping (5:3-4) One elder saying (5:5)	καὶ εἶδον (5:2)	The heavenly court	John, a strong angel
	5:6-7	A Lamb taking the scroll	Καὶ εἶδον (5:6)	The heavenly court	God, a Lamb
	5:8-10	<b>Praising</b> by the four living creatures & 24 elders	καὶ ὅτε ἔλαβεν τὸ βιβλίον (5:8)	The heavenly court	24 elders, four living creatures, a lamb
	5:11-12	<b>Praising</b> by many angels	Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα (5:11)	The heavenly court	Many angels
	5:13-14	<b>Praising by every creature</b>	ἤκουσα λέγοντα... (5:13)	The heavenly court	Every creature, the Lamb, elders, four living creatures
UL1 (6:1-2)	6:1-2	The first seal: <b>conquest</b>	Καὶ εἶδον ὅτε ἤνοιξεν... μίαν ἐκ τῶν ἑπτά... Ἐρχου. (6:1).	World	A Lamb, one of the four living creatures, a rider on a white horse
UL1 (6:3-4)	6:3-4	The second seal: <b>Take peace from the earth</b>	Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν δευτέραν, ἤκουσα... Ἐρχου. (6:3).	World	A Lamb, the second living creature, a rider on a fiery red horse
UL1 (6:5-6)	6:5-6	The third seal: A bad harvest	Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν τρίτην, ἤκουσα... Ἐρχου. (6:5)	World	A Lamb, the third living creature, a rider on a black horse



UL1 (6:7-8)	6:7-8	The fourth seal: <b>A fourth of the earth was killed by sword, famine and plague, and the wild beasts</b>	Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν τέταρτην, ἤκουσα ... Ἐρχου. (6:7)	World	A Lamb, the third living creature, a rider on a pale horse
UL (6:9-11)	6:9-11	<b>The fifth seal:</b> Cry of the martyrs	Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα, εἶδον ... (6:9)	Under the altar in heaven	The souls of those who had been slain, God
UL1 (6:12-17)	6:12-17	The sixth seal: the great day of the wrath of them (God and the Lamb)	Καὶ εἶδον ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἕκτην... (6:12)	Earth	A Lamb, the kings, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, every slave and every free man
UL1 (7:1-17)	7:1	<b>Four angels</b> standing at the four corners of the earth	Μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον ... (7:1)	Earth	Four angels
	7:2-3	<b>Another angel</b> prohibiting from harming earth and sea	καὶ εἶδον ... (7:2)	Earth	Another angel, four angels
	7:4-8	<b>Sealing</b> of the saints on earth	καὶ ἤκουσα... (7:4)	Earth	Another angel
	7:9-10	<b>Praising</b> by great multitude (7:9-10)	Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον ... (7:9)	Before the throne and the Lamb	Great multitude, God
	7:11-12	<b>Praising</b> by all the angels (7:11-12)		Before the throne and the Lamb	All the angels, God
	7:13-17	<b>Asking</b> (17:13) and <b>answering</b> (17:14-17) by one elder		Before the throne and the Lamb	one of the elders, John
UL1 (8:1)	8:1	<b>The seventh seal:</b> Silence in heaven for about half an hour	Καὶ ὅταν ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἑβδόμην ...	Heaven	Jesus alone
UL1 (8:2-6)	8:2-5	<b>Heavenly liturgy for seven trumpets</b>	καὶ εἶδον ... (8:2) καὶ ἐγένοντο βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ σεισμός. (8:5)	Heaven	Seven angels, Another angel, God
	8:6	<b>Preparation to sound the seven trumpets</b>		Heaven	The seven angels only
UL1 (8:7)	8:7	<b>The first trumpet:</b> A third of earth was burned up.	Καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἐσάλπισεν· (8:7)	From heaven to earth	The first angel only
UL1 (8:8-9)	8:8-9	<b>The second trumpet:</b> A third of the sea was harmed.	Καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· (8:8)	From heaven to earth	The second angel only
UL1 (8:10-11)	8:10-11	<b>The third trumpet:</b> A third of the waters turned bitter	Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· (8:10)	From heaven to earth	The third angel only
UL1 (8:12)	8:12	<b>The fourth trumpet:</b> A third of the sun, the moon, the stars turned dark.	Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· (8:12)	From heaven to earth	The fourth angel only
UL1 (8:13-9:12a)	8:13	<b>Eagle's triple cry-woe:</b> emphasizing three impending woes functionally	Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα (8:13)	Mid-air	An eagle only
	9:1-12a	<b>The fifth trumpet:</b> Locusts from the Abyss torture only those without the seal of God	Καὶ ὁ πέμπτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ εἶδον (9:1)	From the Abyss to the earth	The fifth angel, locusts, people without the seal of God.
UL1 (9:12b-21)	9:12b	<b>Warning</b> of two other woes yet to come		Mid-air	An eagle
	9:13-21	<b>The sixth trumpet:</b> A third of mankind killed (9:18) The rest of mankind still not to repent (9:20-21)	Καὶ ὁ ἕκτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἤκουσα (9:13)	Earth	The sixth angel, the four angels of Euphrates, the mounted troops.
UL1 (10:1-11)	10:1-3	The figures of another mighty angel Visionary part (10:1-2) Auditory part (10:3)	Καὶ εἶδον... (10:1)	Earth	Another mighty angel, a voice from heaven

	10:4	<b>The angel prophesying:</b> Commanding not to write (10:4)	καὶ ὅτε... καὶ ἤκουσα (10:4)	Earth	Another mighty angel, a voice from heaven
	10:5-7	<b>The swearing of the angel:</b> "there should be no more delay" (10:5); "the mystery of God should be fulfilled" (10:7)	καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος, ὃν εἶδον (10:5)	Earth	Another mighty angel, a voice from heaven
	10:8	The voice from heaven (10:8)	καὶ λέγουσαν ...τὸ (10:8)	Earth	A voice from heaven, John
	10:9-10	<b>John ate the scroll</b> (10:9-10)	καὶ λέγει μοι (10:9)	Earth	Another mighty angel, John
	10:11	<b>John must again prophecy</b> (10:11)	καὶ λέγουσίν μοι (10:11)	Earth	Another mighty angel, John
UL1 (11:1-13)	11:1-2	<b>John measuring the temple of God</b>	λέγων (11:1)	Earth	Another mighty angel, John
	11:3-6	Prophesying about two witnesses		Earth	Another mighty angel, Two witnesses.
	11:7-10	<b>The beast from the Abyss killing them</b> (11:7) Commentary (11:8) The people's response (11:9-10)	καὶ ὅταν τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν ... (11:7)	Earth	Two witnesses, The beast from the Abyss, The inhabitants of the earth
	11:11-12	Two witnesses going up to heaven	καὶ μετὰ τὰς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ ἡμισυ ... (11:11)	Earth	God, two witnesses, those who saw them, a loud voice from heaven, their foe
	11:13	<b>The survivors giving glory to God</b>	καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ᾠρᾷ (11:13)	Earth	the survivors.
UL1 (11:14-19)	11:14	<b>Warning of the third woe soon to come</b>		Mid-air	An eagle
	11:15	<b>The 7th trumpet:</b> Praise by loud voices in heaven	καὶ ὁ ἑβδομος ἄγγελος ... (11:15)	In heaven	Loud voices in heaven
	11:16-18	<b>Worship</b> (11:16) & <b>Praise</b> by the 24 elders (11:17-18)		In heaven	The 24 elders
	11: 19	<b>The ark of his covenant</b> and ending marker (11:19)	Ending marker: καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη (11:19)	In heaven	The 24 elders
UL1 (12:1-6)	12:1-2	<b>A great portent</b> appeared - A woman with child.	καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ᾤφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ... (12:1).	Heaven	A woman
	12:3-4	<b>Another portent</b> appeared – a great red dragon	καὶ ᾤφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ... (12:3)	Heaven to earth	an enormous red dragon
	12:5-6	<b>Her giving birth to a male child</b> and its ascension (12:5) and her flight into the desert (12:6)		The wilderness	A woman, a male child, God
UL1 (12:7-12)	12:7-9	War in heaven		Heaven to earth	Michael and his angels, the dragon and his angels
	12:10-12	<b>Commentary &amp; warning</b> by a loud voice in heaven	καὶ ἤκουσα (12:10)	Heaven	A loud voice
UL1 (12:13-17)	12:13-17	<b>The dragon to make war</b> on the rest of her offspring	καὶ ὅτε εἶδεν (12:13)	Earth	A woman, a dragon, the rest of her offspring
UL1 (13:1-10)	13:1-8	<b>Intercalation (flash forward to the end times):</b> A beast from the sea and the whole world following it	καὶ εἶδον (13:1)	The earth	a beast from the sea, the whole world. The dragon. The saints



	13:9-10	<b>A call for the endurance and faith of the saints</b>	Εἰ τις ἔχει οὖς ἀκουσάτω (13:9)		
UL1 (13:11-18)	13:11-18	<b>Another beast from the earth</b> and his killing all those who will not worship its image (13:11-17a) Commentary for mark "666" (13:17b-18)	Καὶ εἶδον (13:11)	The earth	Another beast from the earth, the inhabitants of the earth
UL1 (14:1-5)	14:1	<b>The Lamb and 144,000</b> who sing a new song: Visionary part (14:1)	Καὶ εἶδον (14:1)	On the Mount of Zion	The Lamb, 144,000
	14:2-3	Auditory part (14:2-3)	καὶ ἤκουσα (14:2)	On the Mount of Zion	The throne, the 4 living creatures, the elders, 144,000
	14:4-5	Commentary (14:4-5)			The Lamb, 144,000
UL1 (14:6-13)	14:6	<b>Eternal gospel:</b> Another angel with an eternal gospel (14:6)	Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον (14:6).	In mid-heaven	Another angel
	14:7	The angel crying to worship God, for the hour his judgement has come (14:7)		In mid-heaven	Another angel
	14:8	<b>Prophecy "Babylon the great is fallen"</b> by a 2nd angel	Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος δεύτερος	Mid-air	A second angel
	14:9-11	<b>Prophecy about worshippers of the beast by a 3rd angel</b>	Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος τρίτος (14:9)	Mid-air	A third angel
	14:12	<b>Commentary</b> (14:12)			
	14:13a	<b>Beatitude</b> (14:13a) by a voice from heaven	Καὶ ἤκουσα (14:13)	From heaven	A voice from heaven
	14:13b	<b>Response</b> (14:13b) by the Spirit	Μακάριοι		The Spirit
UL1 (14:14-20)	14:14-16	Harvesting by Jesus himself	Καὶ εἶδον (14:14)	Earth	One "like a son of man", <b>another angel (a)</b> from the temple
	14:17-20	Gathering the vintage of the earth	Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος (14:17)	Earth	<b>Another angel (b)</b> from the heavenly temple, <b>still another angel (c)</b> from the altar.
UL1 (15:1-16:1)	15:1	<b>Introduction of the vision of the seven bowls</b>	Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο σημεῖον (15:1)	In heaven	
	15:2-4	<b>The overcome singing the new song of Moses in heaven</b>	Καὶ εἶδον (15:2)	Beside the sea of glass	The victorious
	15:5-8	Preparation in the heavenly temple for the emptying of the seven bowls	Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον (15:5)	In heaven	The seven angels, one of the four living creatures.
	16:1	<b>Command</b> of "a loud voice from the temple" for the seven angels to pour out on the earth the seven bowls	Καὶ ἤκουσα (16:1)	In heaven	A loud voice from the temple, the seven angels
UL1 (16:2)	16:2	<b>The first bowl:</b> Foul and evil sores	Καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ἐξέχεεν	The land	The first angel only
UL1 (16:3)	16:3	<b>The second bowl:</b> The sea turned into blood	Καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἐξέχεεν	The sea	The second angel only
UL1 (16:4-7)	16:4	<b>The third bowl:</b> The sea turned into blood	Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἐξέχεεν	The rivers and the fountains of water	The third angel only
	16:5-6	Response in the praise of the angel of water (16:5-6)	καὶ ἤκουσα (16:5, 7)	The rivers and springs of water	The third angel
	16:7	Response in the praise of the altar (16:7)	καὶ ἤκουσα (16:5, 7)	The rivers and springs of water	The altar

UL1 (16:8-9)	16:8	<b>The fourth bowl:</b> Plague on the sun (16:8)	Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἐξέχεεν (16:8)	The sun & the earth	The fourth angel, people
UL1 (16:10-11)	16:9	Response by people (who refused to repent and give him glory) (16:9)		The sun & the earth	People
	16:10a	<b>The fifth bowl:</b> Plague on the throne of the beast (16:10a)	Καὶ ὁ πέμπτος ἐξέχεεν (16:10)	On the throne of the beast	The fifth angel, people
	16:10b-11	Response by people (who did not repent of their deeds) (16:10b-11)		The earth	People
UL1 (16:12-16)	16:12	<b>The sixth bowl:</b> Plague on the Euphrates (16:12)	Καὶ ὁ ἕκτος ἐξέχεεν (16:12)	On the Euphrates	The sixth angel only
	16:13-14	Response by the demonic spirits and the kings of the whole world	Καὶ εἶδον (16:13)	The whole world	Three evil spirits, The Kings
	16:15	Response of Jesus: Beatitude	Ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτῃς μακάριος (16:15)		
	16:16	Response of three evil spirits: Assembling the kings in Amageddon		Amageddon	Three evil spirits, The Kings
UL1 (16:17-21)	16:17a	<b>The seventh bowl:</b> Plague on the air	Καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἐξέχεεν (16:17)	On the air (16:17a)	The seventh angel
	16:17b	Response of a loud voice from the throne: "It is done!" (16:17b)		Heaven and (16:17b)	A loud voice from the throne
	16:18-21	Happening on the earth afterwards (16:18-20) and response of men to the plague of the hail (16:21)	ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός (16:18)	Great Babylon and the cities of the nations	
UL1 (17:1-18)	17:1-2	<b>"The judgement of the great harlot":</b> Introductory part of the vision	λέγων ... δεῖξω <sup>8</sup> (17:1)		One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, John
	17:3a	<b>Pneumatic rapture into a wildness (17:3)</b>	καὶ ἀπῆνεγκέν με εἰς ἔρημον ἐν πνεύματι (17:3a)	<b>A desert (17:3)</b>	The Spirit, John,
	17:3b-5	<b>The figure of the woman (17:3b-5)</b>	καὶ εἶδον (17:3b)		A woman sitting on a scarlet beast.
	17:6	<b>Response of John:</b> "He marveled greatly"	καὶ εἶδον (17:6)		John
	17:7-14	<b>Commentary by the angel:</b> The mystery of "the woman" and "the beast"	καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὁ ἄγγελος (17:7)		John, the angel, the woman, the beast, the Lamb
	17:15-18	<b>Commentary by the angel:</b> "The waters where the harlot is seated."	Καὶ λέγει μοι (17:15)		John, the angel, peoples, the harlot, ten horns, the beast, God
UL1 (18:1-24)	18:1-3	<b>Proclamation by another angel:</b> "the fall of Babylon"	Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον (18:1)		Another angel (a),
	18:4-8	<b>Urging by another voice from heaven:</b> his people to come out of Babylon	Καὶ ἤκουσα ἄλλην φωνὴν (18:4)		Another voice from heaven (b)
	18:9-10	<b>Mourning by the kings</b>		Earth	The kings of the earth
	18:11-17a	<b>Mourning by the merchants</b>		Earth	The merchants of the earth
	18:17b-20	<b>Mourning by all seamen</b>		The sea	All shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea

<sup>8</sup> As "λέγων" and "δεῖξω" correspond to "ἤκουσα" and "εἶδον" respectively, they may functionally play the same role as demarcating markers "καὶ ἤκουσα" and "καὶ εἶδον."



	18:21-24	<b>Symbolizing action</b> for the fall of Babylon by a mighty angel		The sea	A mighty angel
UL1 (19:1-10)	19:1-3	<b>Praising God</b> by "what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude": God's salvation and judgement	Μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα (19:1)	Heaven	a great multitude
	19:4	<b>Worshipping God</b> by The 24 elders and the four living creatures		Heaven	The 24 elders and the four living creatures
	19:5	<b>Urging His servants</b> to praise God by a voice from the throne	Καὶ φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου ἐξῆλθεν λέγουσα,	Heaven	A voice from the throne
	19:6-8	<b>Praising</b> by the voice of a great multitude (a) "God the Almighty reigns." (19:6) (b) "the marriage of the Lamb has come" (19:7-8)	καὶ ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν (19:6)	Heaven	What seemed to be the voice of a great multitude
	19:9	<b>Beatitude</b> by the angel (19:9)	λέγει...	Earth	The angel, John
	19:10	John nearly <b>worshipping</b> the angel (19:10)	καὶ λέγει μοι	Earth	The angel, John
UL1 (19:11-21)	19:11-16	<b>A rider on a white horse</b> and his armies' campaign	Καὶ εἶδον τὸν οὐρανὸν (19:11)	Heaven and earth	A rider on a white horse (or "the Word of God"), the armies of heaven
	19:17-18	<b>An angel commanding</b> all the birds to eat the flesh of all men	Καὶ εἶδον ἕνα ἄγγελον (19:17)	The sun, mid-air	An angel, all the birds flying in mid-air
	19:19-21	<b>The victory of the rider on the horse</b> (and his army) over the beast and the kings with their armies	Καὶ εἶδον (19:19)	Earth, the Abyss	the beast, The kings and their armies, a rider on the horse, the false prophet
UL1 (20:1-3)	20:1-3	<b>The victory</b> over the dragon before the millennium: An angel throwing the dragon into the Abyss	Καὶ εἶδον ἄγγελον... (20:1)	From heaven to earth, the Abyss	An angel, the dragon
UL1 (20:4-6)	20:4	<b>The first resurrection</b> : The beheaded saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years (20:4)	Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους... (20:4)	Heaven	The souls, Christ
	20:5-6	Commentary (20:5-6) with beatitude (20:6a)			
UL1 (20:7-10)	20:7-10	<b>The final judgement</b> of the dragon after the millennium	Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη (20:7)	Earth, the abyss	Satan, the nations - Gog and Magog
UL1 (20:11-15)	20:11	<b>A great white throne and him who sat upon it</b>	Καὶ εἶδον θρόνον (20:11)	Earth and sky fled	One who was seated on a great white throne.
	20:12-15	" <b>The second death</b> " of those whose name found written in the book of life book of life	καὶ εἶδον ... (20:12)	Before the throne, the lake of fire	One who was seated on a great white throne, the dead
UL1 (21:1-8)	21:1	<b>A new heaven and a new earth</b>	Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν (21:1)	A new heaven and a new earth	
	21:2	<b>The holy city</b>	καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον... (21:2)	The holy city	
	21:3-4	<b>Proclamation:</b> The dwelling of God with men (21:3-4)	καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης (21:3)		
	21:5	God' proclamation (for making all things new), and His commanding John to write this (21:5b).	Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, Ἰδοὺ (21:5)		God, John

	21:6-8	God's self-prediction (21:6a) and His blessing (21:6b-7) and curse (21:8).	καὶ εἰπέν μοι (21:6)		
UL1 (21:9-27)	21:9	<b>Proposing</b> by one of the seven angels to John: to show you the Bride of Lamb (21:9)			One of the seven angels, John
	21:10a	<b>Rapture</b> in the Spirit to a great, high mountain (21:10)	ἐν πνεύματι	<b>A great and high mountain</b>	One of the seven angels, John, the Spirit.
	21:10b-14	<b>The outside features of the holy city:</b> The sight of the holy city (21:10b-14) - its radiance (21:11) and its wall (21:12-14)	καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ (21:10b)	<b>The holy city Jerusalem</b>	One of the seven angels, John, the Spirit.
	21:15-21	The measurement of the city (21:15-17) The material of the wall (21:18), its foundations (21:19-20), its twelve gates, and its street (21:21)		The holy city Jerusalem	He who talked to John ("the angel" from 21:9)
	21:22-27	Commentary regarding the features of the holy city.	Καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ (21:22)		
UL1 (22:1-5)	22:1-5	<b>The inside features of the holy city:</b> The river of the water of life, the tree of life (22:1-2); the life of His servants in it (22:3-5)	Καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι (22:1)		
UL1 (22:6-17)	22:6	Epilogue: <b>The angel: The purpose of revelation</b>	Καὶ εἰπέν μοι (22:6)		
	22:7	<b>The beatitude</b> by Jesus who keeps the words of the prophecy of the book	ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ.		
	22:8	<b>John's falling down</b> to worship the angel (22:8)	Κἀγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. (22:8)		The angel, John
	22:9	<b>The angel advising</b> John to worship only God (22:9)	καὶ λέγει μοι (22:9)		The angel, John
	22:10-11	<b>Jesus' ordering:</b> not to seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for time is near (22:10-11)	καὶ λέγει μοι (22:10)		Jesus, John
	22:12-13	<b>Proclamation of Jesus:</b> "I am coming soon" with his self-identification	Ἰδοὺ <sup>9</sup> ἔρχομαι ταχύ (22:12)		Jesus
	22:14-15	<b>Blessing and cursing by Jesus:</b> for those who wash their robes (22:14) and against the evil doers (22:15)			
	22:16	<b>Jesus' statement</b> of the revelatory transmission (22:16a) with Jesus' self-predication (22:16b)	Ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦ <sup>10</sup> (22:16)		
	22:17	<b>Invitation</b> by the Spirit and the Bride	Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν (22:17)		
UL1 (22:18-21)	22:18-19	<b>Warning</b> by John: Canonization formula on Christ's part			
	22:20	<b>Proclamation</b> by Jesus: "I am coming soon." and a <b>prophetic cultic response</b> by John ("Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!")	Λέγει ὁ μαρτυρῶν ταῦτα (22:20)		
	22:21	Blessing to addressee			

9 When "Ἰδοὺ" calls the audience to attention, it may play the same role as a demarcating marker "καὶ"



From the chart above, it seems obvious that these demarcated small sections are ready for grouping into the basic narrative units. But before that, it is necessary to point out some important things which we can deduce from this chart.

1. From the first column (“theme change” or “event change”), we realize that several sections together are often included in the same event or theme. This fact urges us to group the (thematically) correlated adjacent sections into a larger unit on thematic basis. This “thematic grouping” as one of “cohering strategies” will be applied over and over again until we reach the global structure of the Apocalypse of John.

2. Repetitive phrases such as I saw (καὶ εἶδον) and I heard (καὶ ἤκουσα) often appear at the beginning of a section as demarcating markers and they often accompany adverbial phrases signalling the time of an event. They also often alternatively lead “auditory sections” or “visionary sections” through the text – e.g., 7:1-3 beginning with “I saw,” 7:4-8 beginning with “I heard” and 7:9-10 beginning with “I saw.”

3. Finding the switch in a group of actors, often with change in place, seems to be important because various correlated actors may be scattered in the same event or theme. “Place” and “character(s)” changes are not so much “independent” but “dependent” on a theme or an event, and their changes often are combined with the repetitive phrases such as “I saw,” “I heard,” the phrases indicating a time, etc.

4. The beginning of a new basic narrative unit should concur with the demarcating starting point of a partial unit. And the end of the basic narrative unit also should fall on the demarcating ending point of a partial unit. Thus delimiting the small sections (or making “partial narrative units”) can be told to be planned as the preparatory work in order to identify the “basic narrative units” in 4.4.

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εἶδον.”

10 According to Hellholm ([1982] 1986: 41-42), “renominalization” as a delimitation-marker often goes together with other markers. It is because “this marker reintroduces an actor who has been referred to by a pronoun, with a noun or his proper name. There seems to be a direct relationship between the change in the arrangement of actors and the renoninalization.”

5. It is noted that the apocalyptic story structure reflecting these various narrative elements, is not merely to be conceived of as large blocks of material separated from one another. Instead, one is to understand that they are dynamically well interrelated to transfer the author's theology effectively by various cohering literary strategies. While being narrated, a story can take many turns. Some turns in the story are of primary significance, whereas others are of secondary, tertiary, or even lesser significance (see 4.6.1. Narrative-syntactic structure of the Apocalypse: The superstructure of the book).



### 4.3. The Principles for the Identification of the Narrative Units

#### 4.3.1 General

A vision, in fact, may have more than one narrative level. Narratives may be embedded in other narratives, like Hamlet's "play within a play"<sup>1</sup> (Boring 1992:703).

We can assume that the global narrative of the Apocalypse consists of many small narratives, although how many narratives are included therein will depend on the point of view of the critics. In the process of integration into the global unit, each narrative unit will be located in its own narrative level, e.g. the basic (smallest) unit level, the larger unit level, the quite larger unit level... to the global unit level.

I follow the procedure of upward integration in the study, starting from delimitation of the whole text into many small parts - *Partial (or Incomplete) Narrative Unit* ("PNU")- by using various narrative elements, and then assembling small sections into *Basic (or Complete) Narrative Units* ("BNU") by using several principles to identify the narrative unit, and continuing in that way to identify the "bigger narrative units" and finally reaching the biggest narrative, which comprises the whole text. I therefore need to name the various levels of narrative discourse units in ascending order (from "the smallest narrative discourse unit level" up to "the largest narrative discourse unit level"). I shall use an abbreviated forms like UL1, UL2, UL3...UL(n-1) to ULn as the size of units increases. Thus UL1 will indicate "the smallest narrative discourse unit level," UL2 "the second smallest narrative discourse unit level," UL(n-1) will indicate "the second largest narrative discourse unit level," and ULn "the global narrative discourse unit level."

#### Constraints to the Upward Integration Steps

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<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2. Frye (1982: 33) also mentions "We can also have myths within myths, like the parables of Jesus or Achilles' fable of the two jars of Zeus at the end of the *Iliad*, ..."

Although the task to cohere smaller units (until we arrive at the whole text as a single unit) can be done at numerous different narrative levels, it would be far beyond the scope of this small study. Instead, we shall practically choose to consider only the minimum narrative levels towards this end, namely to show that *the book is a cohered unit with a plot*. These are:

- UL1 being represented by *basic narrative units* (“BNU”);
- UL2 being obtained by grouping *adjacent units* that fall under the same theme or event;
- UL3 being defined according to *plot* (setting, complication, resolution, evaluation, coda/moral);
- UL4 being divided into *introduction*, *body part* and *ending* by means of the literary strategy leading into/out of the visionary world (1:9 and 22:6);
- UL5, finally, at the highest level, representing *the whole narrative* as a coherent unity.

In this work, only five narrative levels may be sufficient to establish a syntactic (or schematic) structure of John’s narrative.

#### **4.3.2. The Criteria for identifying Narrative Units**

##### **4.3.2.1 The Criteria for identifying Basic Narrative Units**

Delimiting the whole book into many small parts (“Partial Narrative Unit”) has been done as a preliminary job to identify complete narrative units (“Basic Narrative Units”). Each of the small parts is not sufficiently qualified to be an “(independently) self-contained narrative unit” which could be used for analyzing the structure of the Apocalypse as a narrative. Therefore, at this stage, it is necessary to indicate how to identify these narrative units, according to certain criteria. Patte (1990a:9-21) provides some ideas for this purpose from the structural exegetical perspective. After explaining general principles, he (:15) emphasizes two basic criteria for identifying discourse units in a text – (1) a change of theme at the beginning and after the end of a passage, and (2) inverted parallelisms between its introduction and conclusion. His ideas can also be applied to a narrative text, because, according to him (:14-15), ““inverted parallelisms’



between the introduction and the conclusion of a unit as well as ‘a change of theme’ at the beginning and after the end of a unit are found in any text-discourse, although they are expressed in many different ways according to the type of discourse (i.e., according to the type of effect the discourse is expected to have upon readers).”

By using Patte’s ideas for identifying discourse units, we can apply some criteria for identifying narrative units as follows:

(1) **A change of theme at the beginning and after the end of a passage** will be a strong indication that we have a complete narrative unit, since each unit has a specific theme (Patte 1990a:15). A theme can be represented by the subject of a description or an episodic event. A theme within the basic narrative unit should be constant. The thematic changes probably function as most important signals for the beginning and ending of new narrative units.

(2) **In a narrative, changes of character(s) or setting (space and/or time) bring about a change of event (scene)** accompanying the change of theme. By finding such changes, one can easily identify narrative units (Patte 1990a:16). That is, the switch in a group of actors, which is in line with “change in setting,” should be the signal of a new narrative unit (Hellholm [1982] 1986:41).

(3) **Inverted parallelisms exist between the beginning and the end of each complete narrative unit.** There is parallelism because both deal with the same theme; this parallelism is inverted because the introduction may be presented as problematic, while the conclusion presents it as a resolved issue.

When an author aims at transforming the world view, feeling, or general convictions of the readers in a narrative discourse,<sup>2</sup> it is easy to recognize the inverted parallelisms:

The situation presented in the introduction is transformed by the time one reaches the

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<sup>2</sup> Patte (1990a:15) prefers “narrative discourses” to “narratives” so as to make it clear that, from the perspective of structural exegesis, any narrative is viewed as a “discourse” addressed by an author (enunciator) to readers or hearers (enunciatees).

conclusion. This can be found even in the small discourse units or subunits (on lower story level), but in the whole narrative discourse (on the global level) it would be obvious that the author is leading the readers to transform their worldview (Patte 1990a:15).<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, a parallelism can be inverted when several types of functions present themselves as binary oppositions between the beginning and the end of a complete section. Calloud (1976:17-18) introduces some categories for functional binary opposition: arrival vs. departure, conjunction vs. disjunction, mandating vs. acceptance (or refusal), confrontation, victory vs. defeat, communication vs. reception, attribution vs. deprivation.<sup>4</sup> These categories will also be helpful in identifying a narrative unit at any narrative level.

(4) In case there are no inverted parallelisms between the beginning and the end of a section that should form a discrete narrative unit, **we can use the similar criterion known as “inclusion,”** which refers to a repetition of features at the beginning and end of a unit. But here it is worth taking note of the difference in emphasis between “inverted parallelism” and “inclusion”:

The term “inclusion” used in rhetorical theory designates a phenomenon similar to that of “inverted parallelisms.” The main difference is that rhetorical analysis tends to emphasize what is common to the beginning and end of a unit, while structural exegesis underscores what is different in the way in which the common theme is presented (Patte

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<sup>3</sup> The same is true of the discourse units and subunits of any text discourse, which can be identified by taking note of the changes in themes and of the inverted parallelisms that signal their respective introductions and conclusions.

<sup>4</sup> Arrival vs. Departure: This is interrelated according to the category “movement” or “presence/absence.”

Conjunction vs. Disjunction: This occurs when an actor encounters another and they separate.

Mandating vs. Acceptance (or Refusal): This happens when an action is proposed to an actor, and he accepts it or refuses it.

Confrontation: Two actors confronting each other are in exactly symmetrical positions.

Victory vs. Defeat: This is an end product of the preceding function.

Communication vs. Reception: This happens when an actor transfers any kind of “object(s)” to another and it is received.

Attribution vs. Deprivation: This is a negative form of the preceding function.



1990a:19).

The principles that are used to identify the narrative units at the low level can also be applied even when we try to identify the (generally bigger) narrative units on the higher levels. For example, such narrative units will often be strengthened by a particular opening word(s) or phrase(s) such as “I saw” or “I heard” and a noticeable ending (word(s) or phrase(s)) such as “thunders, voices, lightning and an earthquake.” Furthermore, a reasonable break between sections will be recognized by various scholars – e.g. Bowman’s chart (1955: 444-5), whereas a questionable break will not be supported.

(5) For the definition of the basic narrative unit, the following elements of narration also is worth considering, because the size of the basic narrative unit varies from just one verse to a whole chapter. There are *mimesis* (showing) and *diegesis* (telling) as two describing ways in the narrative theory.<sup>5</sup>

*Mimesis* (Showing or Scene):

“The Greek word for imitation, a central term in aesthetic and literary theory since Aristotle. A literary work that is understood to be reproducing an external reality or any aspect of it is described as mimetic” (Baldick 1990:137).

*Diegesis* (Telling or Summary):

“Narrator describes what happened in his/her own words (or recounts what characters act, think and feel, without quotation)” (Martin 1986:124).<sup>6</sup> The narrowest definition of narration equates it with summary or telling.

#### 4.3.2.2. *The Criteria for identifying Higher Narrative Units*

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<sup>5</sup> The distinction between *Mimesis* and *Diegesis* happens especially because of the “duration” of the events. It refers to the temporal ratio between the time an incident would take to occur and the time taken to tell about it. Cf. chapter 3.2.2.2.

<sup>6</sup> An analytic term ‘*diegesis*’ is used in modern narratology to designate the narrated events or story (French, *histoire*) as a ‘level’ distinct from that of the narration.

There would be many ways to name and group elements of narrative, depending on the assumptions and purposes of the analyst. If the object is to reveal the total structure of a story, the parts will be named in relation to the hypothesized whole, and that whole will control the identification of the parts (Martin 1986:111).

#### 4.3.2.2.1. Various Integrating Principles

After the basic narrative units (UL1), I will continue to identify the narrative units on higher levels until we progress to the global narrative unit of the Apocalypse, which will mean that the book has an integral unity. For this purpose, it is worthy to survey some other scholars' efforts to combine the smallest narrative units into the bigger narrative units. Related to the development history of narrative theory, I have chosen Tomshevsky (1925) from among Russian Formalist critics, Barthes (1966) from among French Structural theorists, and Chatman (1978) from among Narratologists as representative for a comparison of the manner of integration as well as the terms I am using.

##### Tomashevsky's Terms ([1925] 1965)

Tomashevsky refers to the basic unit of narration as "motif" - "the smallest particle of *thematic* material." He emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between parts and wholes. He constructs his theory by fitting the smallest units together in molecular structures and then integrating these at higher levels.

He subclasses units into "bound motif" and "free motif." The former indicates the major motif which cannot be omitted in retelling, while the latter, as the minor motif, can be omitted because it is not essential to the plotline. He again classifies "bound motif" into "dynamic motif" and "static motif." The former refers to the one that can change a situation, while the latter - as that which does not contribute to the development of the action - indicates all the details of the text that are traditionally known as setting or description.

##### Barthes' Terms (1966)



The “functions” in his theory form what he calls a “sequence” that opens and closes with “kernels.” When two successive actions imply each other within a sequence (e.g. start doing something – stop doing so), they are called “kernels” (or cardinal functions): . On the other hand, some functions, referred to as “satellites,” are optional actions within the sequence, filling narrative space between cardinal functions. Therefore the satellite can be defined as a function that could have been omitted without breaking up the causal continuity.

Corresponding to these two types of action, there are two kinds of static elements: “informants” and “indices.” The former play a role in fixing setting, time and, as “minor indices,” make the scene concrete, while the latter indicate “indices proper” – character traits, thoughts, atmosphere that require deciphering. Accordingly, it is the traditionally-named “setting” or “description” which Barthes calls “informants” or “indices.”

In the case of Barthes, functions are grouped together in sequences, which may themselves form larger units. In the meanwhile, at a higher level of organization, “character” plays a main role to bind sequences together. In Barthes’ sense, a narrative as a whole can be conceived as a single “action” of which sequences and characters are parts.

#### Chatman’s Terms (1978)

Chatman (1980:26, 267) illustrates a diagram of narrative structure for the purpose of helping our understanding of the terms. According to him ([1978] 1980: 22-26, 31-32, 267), narratives are communications. What is communicated is “story”; and it is communicated by “discourse.” The discourse is said to “state” the story.

Narrative discourse consists of a connected sequence of narrative statements which are of two kinds – “process” and “stasis” – according to whether “events” (which consist of “actions” and “happenings”) or “existents” (which consist of “character” and “setting”)

are concerned.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the term “process statements” is used when someone does something (action) or something happens (happening), while the term “stasis statements” is used when something simply existed in the story (existents). A stasis statement may communicate either or both of two aspects: the “identity” of an existent or its “quality” (e.g. trait or mood). Thus “process statements” can be represented in the mode of “DO” or “HAPPEN,” while “stasis statements” can be expressed in the mode of “IS” (:32).

If “events” (either “actions” or “happenings”) are logically essential, he calls them “kernels,” while if they are not, he calls them “satellites.” On the other hand, the distinction of “existents” (either “characters” or a “settings”) depends on degree of significance for the plot.

At the highest level of organization, he put the integrating principle on the “macrostructure” according to genre, although he cautiously adds that “the characterization of plot into macrostructures depends upon an understanding of cultural codes and their interplay with literary and artistic codes, but for the present, it is questionable that all narratives can be successfully grouped according to a few forms of plot-content” (: 95).

#### Terms used in this Study of the Apocalypse

In the previous section (4.2.2.), the delimitation chart was obtained by demarcating the whole book in terms of the changing aspects of story elements (event/theme, setting, character). But the sections at this level are not yet qualified as “basic narrative units” – that is, as self-governing narrative units - but as partial (incomplete) units.

Earlier in this section, several strategies for identifying discourse units (BNU or UL1) are offered: inverted parallelism, inclusion, theme change (often accompanying changes

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<sup>7</sup> According to Chatman (1980:32), events are either “actions”, in which an existent is the agent of the event, or “happenings,” where the existent is the patient.



of character group, setting, and event), occurring at the beginning and after the end of narrative units. However, each unit is ready for grouping together with another adjacent unit or units. Hence it is necessary for the basic units to be grouped together into larger units time and again until the book as a whole is revealed as a cohering unit. This work must be done in the next section.

At the higher unit (or integration) level, four kinds of strategies will be used to bind “closely related narrative units” at the lower unit level group by group:

#### (1) Semantic grouping

The lower narrative units will be integrated under the same theme or the same event. The continuous integration of units will approach the macrostructure of the story semantically by degrees.

#### (2) Syntactic aspects

Various narrative patterns, as mentioned in 3.2.2.2, will be used to identify the syntactic relation between adjacent units or to indicate their sequence. Finally this skill will verify the syntactical coherence of the whole narrative. A (global) literary sequence can be revealed through its plot, which is the narrative flow that the author aims at to create a rhetorical effect when he tries to convince the reader or the audience.

#### (3) Functional coherence

This strategy will be used when we deal with the relationship of the “interrupted sections” with other units. “Where the syntactic or semantic coherence of the Apocalypse seems to be lacking, i.e. where we encounter the intercalations within and the addition to different rows of seven visions, there is a high degree of *functional* [italics mine] coherence” (Hellholm [1982] 1986:54).

#### (4) Pragmatic devices

The Apocalypse of John is designed for the public worship, so we can find many considerations to help oral performance in the text – especially “a mnemonic framework, a structure for remembering for an aurally dependent audience” (Wilson 1997:55-56).

These integrating strategies will not be used separately, but cooperatively to reveal the structure of the narrative discourse, so that it finally achieves a “macrostructure” which shows the theological intention of the author or the text.

#### 4.3.2.2.2. Comparative Table for the various principles

The differences between various narrative terms and integrating strategies are easier to illustrate than to describe separately as above. For this comparative purpose, Martin’s table (1986:113) is borrowed for comparatively presenting mine as follows:

Aspect of narrative structure	Tomashevsky (1925)	Barthes (1966)	Chatman (1978)	Terms applied to the Apocalypse in this study (2001)
Basic unit of narration	<b>motif</b> – “smallest particle of thematic material”	<b>functional unit</b> (cf. Propp) <sup>8</sup>	<b>narrative statement</b>	<b>narrative discourse unit (BNU or NU1)</b>
Categories of unit		<b>functions</b> (actions linking story surface) and <b>indices</b> (static elements integrated at thematic level)	<b>process statements</b> (events) and <b>stasis statements</b> (existents)	<b>episodic units</b> (event section: actions or happenings) and <b>descriptive units</b> (static section)
Subclasses of bound	(1) <b>bound motifs</b> : cannot be omitted in retelling (2) <b>free motifs</b> : can be omitted (not essential to plot line)	(1) <b>kernel</b> (cardinal functions): related actions that open/close uncertainty; <b>indices</b> : character traits, thoughts, atmosphere that require deciphering (2) <b>satellites</b> (minor function): optional actions filling narrative space between cardinal functions; <b>informants</b> : minor indices that fix setting, time	<b>event, character, setting</b>	(1) <b>event, character, setting</b> (by which <i>episodic sections</i> are demarcated) (2) <b>commentary or description</b> (by which various kind of <i>static sections</i> are delimited)

<sup>8</sup> The term “function” denotes a fundamental component of a tale: an action performed by a character that is significant in the unfolding of the story. Propp ([1928] 1978) described 31 such narrative functions in Russian fairy tales, claiming that their order of appearance is invariable, although not every function will appear in one tale. Thus the 11th function (‘the hero leaves home’) necessarily precedes the 18th (‘the villain is defeated’) and the 20th (‘the hero returns’).



Aspect of narrative structure	Tomashevsky (1925)	Barthes (1966)	Chatman (1978)	Terms applied to the Apocalypse in this study (2001)
Integration strategies	sequence of situations - conflicts between characters	kernels with associated satellites make up a sequence from opening to end	kernels and satellites	syntactic skills (to make narrative plot with various narrative patterns)
Integration at higher level	character, "the usual device for grouping together motifs"	action – a complex of character roles involved in particular kinds of situations (cf. Greimas) <sup>9</sup>	macrostructure	semantic grouping (toward macrostructures)
Further Integration	<i>syuzhet</i> , <sup>10</sup> theme	level of "narration" that reintegrates "functions and actions in the narrative communication"	pattern, theme	functional coherence (esp. for interrupted sections )

<sup>9</sup> According to Greimas (1971), six basic categories of fictional role are common to all stories. The actants are paired in binary opposition: Subject/Object, Sender/Receiver, Helper/Oponent.

<sup>10</sup> The *fabula* is to the *syuzhet*, what "what happens" is to "what the story is about," or what "the pre-literary material" is to "the narrative as delivered (told or written)." Specially, the *syuzhet* incorporates the procedures, devices, and thematic emphases of the literary text (Martin 1986:107-115).

## **4.4. Basic Narrative Units (UL1)**

### **UL1 Prologue (1:1-3)**

This section indicates a prologue to the whole text which shows its “title” (1:1a), its “transmission of order” (1:1c-2), and “beatitude” (1:3) to whoever reads the prophecy, because the time is near. This should be sufficient for this to be regarded as a self-dependent unit by nature. And insofar as some words are repeated at the epilogue of the text (22:6-16), it indicates the whole text to be unified: for example, “the time is near” (1:3) is repeated at 22:10; “blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy” in 1:3 is transformed into “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book” in 22:10. Its correspondence to the Epilogue indicates that this part can be a complete narrative unit.

#### **Prologue (1:1-3)**

- a. Title (1:1a): The revelation of Jesus Christ
- b. The witness (1:1b-2): [Jesus] to show to his servants what must soon take place
- c. Reading the prophecy (1:3): Those who keep what is written therein

#### **Epilogue (22:18-21)**

- c. Reading the prophecy (22:18-19): Warning against those who change the words
- b. The witness (22:20): Jesus Christ who testifies to these things
- a. Colophon (22:21): The grace of the Lord Jesus

### **UL1 Epistolary prescript (1:4-8)**

This section as an epistolary prescript includes a “greeting” to the addressee (1:4-5b), “achievements” of Jesus and “doxology” to him who will come again (1:5c-7) and God’s self-predication (1:8) which invests the message with authority from God. The good correspondence between the introductory and concluding parts of the book supports this section as a small complete narrative unit (regarding the further chiasmic



correspondence between them, see 4.5.2.2.6.)

### **UL1 Epiphany (1:9-20)**

This section deals with the event in which John meets Jesus. First the setting for this event is provided, which includes the location and the day on which it happened, with reference to John's situation (1:9). The agent, "the Spirit" draws John to Jesus in rapture (1:10a). The description of Jesus consists of two parts: (a) auditory part – "a loud voice like a trumpet" (1:10b-11) and (b) visionary part - the features of Jesus (1:12-16). The description of Jesus may be tracked down to the various Old Testament sources.<sup>1</sup> When John saw the Son of Man, he fell down like a dead man (1:17a). There are similar events in 19:10, 22:8, which play a role to connect the beginning and the closing part of the text, helping make a unified structure. Jesus' self-predication (1:17b-18) and His commentary (1:20) follows. The repetitive phrases, as an inclusion, make this section a discourse unit. That is to say, "write what you see in a book, and send it to the seven churches" in 1:11 appear in 1:19 and in 1:20, at the beginning and the end of this discourse unit respectively, and 1:9-10 corresponds to the setting of this section.

The prologue and prescript (1:1-20) of the text correspond verbally to the epilogue and postscript (22:6-21) so that the chiastic framework between them will be shown at UL3, which can also underscore the demarcation of this section.

### **Messages to the seven churches<sup>2</sup>**

#### **UL1 The letter to the church in Ephesus (2:1-7)**

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<sup>1</sup> The figure bears a general resemblance to the angel of Daniel's vision (Dan 10:5-6). The robe and girdle is the garb of the high priest (Exod. 28:4, 39:29), the white hair is the mark of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9), the bronze feet remind us of Ezekiel's four living creatures (Ezek 1:7), and the voice of the God of Israel (43:20).

<sup>2</sup> According to Bauckham (1993: 9-10), "the churches are not numbered in sequence, only named. It is important that they are seven (1:11, 20), but the order in which they occur is determined by the route John's messenger would follow, starting from Ephesus. Since they do not form in any other sense a sequence, it is not important that the hearer be made aware of the numerical progression: first, second, third, etc. In the case of the three series of judgments, however, this is important, because these are sequences progressing towards the final judgment."

**UL1The letter to the church in Smyrna (2:8-11)**

**UL1The letter to the church in Pergamum (2:12-17)**

**UL1The letter to the church in Thyatira (2:18-29)**

**UL1The letter to the church in Sardis (3:1-6)**

**UL1The letter to the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13)**

**UL1The letter to the church in Laodicea (3:14-22)**

Each message to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor should be a discourse unit in itself because each is directed to its own congregation and deals with its own theme (or “problem”), as all scholars agree. All of the messages follow a similar pattern: (a) the figure of the addresser, (b) their strengths and weaknesses, (c) the conditional threat, (d) the promises to him who conquers.<sup>3</sup> A more noteworthy thing is that many promises in messages to the seven churches are repeated at the end of the text as fulfillment: the promise of the tree of life in 2:7b also appears in 22:2, 14; the promise of no second death in 2:11b appears in 20:6; the promise of a new name written on the stone in 2:17b appears in 22:4<sup>4</sup>; the promise to “rule the nations” in 2:26-28 appears in 20:6, 22:5b; the promise of being entered in the book of life in 3:5 appears in 20:12; the promise of the new Jerusalem in 3:12 appears in 21:2,10; the promise to “sit with me on the throne” in 3:21 appears in “reign with him” of 20:6. This shows the close coherence between the beginning and ending of the text. It encourages the expectation that small sections can be grouped into larger units at higher narrative levels.

**UL1 Vision of the Throne & the heavenly beings (4:1-11)**

All the visions in this section are described as centering around the throne which is the main theme of this section. After the Spirit enraptures John into the heavenly court and

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<sup>3</sup> The formulaic introductions to each of the seven messages (2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14) are unvarying, as is the refrain which calls attention to what the Spirit says (2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22). It, however, is noteworthy that in the first three the refrain “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7a, 11a, 17a) precedes the promise to the one who conquers (2:7b, 11b, 17b), whereas in the last four the refrain (2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22) follows the promise to the one who conquers (2:26-28, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21).

<sup>4</sup> Caird (1966:42) argues that the pebble is white because it symbolizes the victory, and it bears the secret name of Christ, which no one can learn without sharing his suffering.



council, it is “a throne” and “one seated on the throne” that he saw at the start (4:2) and at the end (4:9,10) of this section which makes an inclusion for this section to be regarded as a complete narrative. And the main theme through this section “a throne and one seated on the throne” also supports this judgment.

Round the throne and Supreme divinity (4:2b-4) are pictured the heavenly beings - the seven spirits (4:5), four living creatures (4:6-9) and 24 elders before the throne (4:10-11). The heavenly court and the throne appear to be the initiator(s) of all the events throughout the narrative. This section may be the setting of the whole or, at least, the main setting of the heavenly events if the text can be separated largely into three narrative levels - the churches’ story on the earth, the divine story in heaven, the theological story<sup>5</sup> in universal respects (Du Rand 1997: 60-65, cf. Boring 1992:704-5)

#### **UL1 Vision of “Heavenly Scroll” (5:1-14)**

The event (or the theme) of this section is centered around “a Scroll.” In the beginning of the section the scroll is sealed with seven seals which no one was found worthy to open, but at the end of the section the heavenly beings praise the Lamb because he is worthy to open its seals. Thus this section contains inverted parallelisms from its beginning to its end, which verify it as a narrative unit. Moreover, the fact that this section can be expressed by one theme “the vision of the heavenly scroll” also supports this decision.

#### **The first four seals (6:1-6:8)**

Although the first four seals’ visions are quite short and their actors take on a similar figure, each vision must be treated as a unique unit in that each of them shows its own plague (event).

#### **UL1 The first seal: conquest (6:1-2)**

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<sup>5</sup> Du Rand (1997:61) explains that “the theological story, as the macronarrative, is not plotted in the

**UL1 The second seal: taking peace from the earth (6:3-4)**

**UL1 The third seal: a bad harvest (6:5-6)**

**UL1 The fourth seal: a fourth of the earth killed (6:7-8)**

**UL1 The fifth seal: cry of the Martyrs (6:9-11)**

As this event has its own characters and setting, with its own theme, it should be treated as an complete narrative unit. The characteristics of this vision seem to be different from those of the first four seals' visions as plagues. Nevertheless its theme (or event) is about "the time to judge and avenge" which is bound up with the theme(s) of the whole text. This involves the necessity of the small sections to be thematically cohered with one another at the higher narrative levels. The intercalation between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals is also linked to the opening of the seal by the themes of the number of the elect (6:11; 7:4-9), their white robes (6:11; 7:9, 13-14) and their death (6:9, 11; 7:13). From this, it can be said to be ready to group them together into a bigger unit at higher unit level(s).

**UL1 The sixth seal: the great day (6:12-17)**

In this section are narrated the things that are to happen on the great day which is the day of the wrath of God and the Lamb. As the theme of the great day continues throughout this vision, this section can be seen as a complete unit. However, the last verse 6:17 ("the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?") requires an answer and tries to extend to and connect with other sections. Most scholars think that the following intercalation (7:1-17) is closely linked to the opening of the sixth seal and that (especially in 7:9) answers the question of 6:17.

**The intercalation vision (7:1-17)**

This section consists of two parts related to the scene: the events on the earth (7:1-8)

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Apocalypse of John but comprehensively presupposed by each of the first two narrative levels."



and the events in heaven (7:9-17). Nevertheless there is no doubt that these are closely related because they are linked with the same theme(s), like “salvation,” and both are related with those who are wearing white robes (7:9, 13-14).

#### **UL1 Intercalation: Sealing the servants of God on the earth (7:1-8)**

As an introductory part of this vision, the segment 7:1-3 introduces another angel with the “seal” of the living God (7:2) calling out to prohibit the four angels from harming earth and sea. The numbers of the “sealed” are given in 7:4-8 and this unit finishes with “sealed” again at the end (7:8b) of the section. This indicates the inclusion that is used to demarcate the section as a narrative unit.

#### **UL1 Intercalation: Praising God and the Lamb in heaven (7:9-17)**

This section largely consists of three praises or prophecies by different actors: praise by the great multitude (7:9-10), praise by all the angels (7:11-12), asking and answering by one of the elders (7:13-17). However they occur in the same place, the heavenly court, and around the same theme, salvation. Therefore the three praises would be better put under a same unit rather than dealt with separately. Moreover the repetition which occurs at both the beginning and the end part of this section will also be an evidence that this section can be seen as a self-contained unit – that is the Lamb (7:10;17), the throne (7:10;17); salvation (7:10) and its cognate variant “springs of living water” (7:17).

#### **UL1 The seventh seal: Silence in heaven (8:1)**

As mentioned previously, this short section should be significant enough to be dealt with as an independent event, the seventh of the seal-opening visions. However, like a pause in music, this part makes us anticipate the next thing with greater tension. Thus this section indicates the end of the seven seal visions, but also prepares for the next event in close relationship with itself. The phrase “καὶ ἤδον” (8:2) also herald the beginning of the new event.

The open-ended visions or the closed-ended visions?

Fourteen of the twenty-one (3x7) events in three septet, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, are also described comparatively briefly – that is, they are less than three verses.

It should be absurd to say that “the solemn silence in heaven” cannot be an important event (or moment) in the narrative flow. This we can see even from the fact that “pauses in music notes” play an essential role to make music. But the silence strongly anticipates “transiting or entering” into a next (or new) story. And “And I saw” in 8:2, as in many cases, introduces the beginning of a new section. On the other hand, the new settings for the trumpet visions correspond to 8:2-5. If so, 8:1 and 8:2-5 can be separated each other.

Also, in the case of the trumpet visions, the seventh of the visions (11:15 –19) is not necessarily open-ended to include the bowl visions. When the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, proclaim “the time has come for judging the dead...” (11:18), it means that the story must not stop there but continue, by entering a new phase. On the other hand, the new settings for the trumpet visions and the bowl visions correspond to 8:2-5 and 15:1-8 respectively.

In a word, the seventh of two (seal and trumpet) visions seems to be open-ended, because the last seal event (8:1) and the last trumpet (11:15-19) strongly anticipate the next phase each of which begins with its own setting.

### **The seven trumpets**

#### **UL1 Heavenly liturgy for seven trumpets (8:2-6)**

Three series of septet visions all commence with the reference to the “heavenly liturgy” in front of the throne: 5:1-14, 8:2-6, 15:1-8 respectively. That means the events in the heavenly court precede the events on the earth - “thy will be done on earth as it is in



heaven.” In other words all kinds of events on the earth can occur by confirmation of God on the throne. This, again, recalls one of the main themes that occur through the text: “God rules over the world.” Such a theme would be used as a strong cohering thread to unite many units into the whole unit, the whole text.

Section 8:2-6 seems to be a complete narrative unit containing an inclusion with several obvious repetitions at its beginning and end - that is, “the seven angels who stand before God, and *seven trumpets given to them*” (8:2) correspond to “*the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them*” (8:6). This inclusion which parenthesizes the heavenly liturgy for blowing in the seven trumpets section, as the introduction to the actual plagues, makes 8:2-6 a complete unit. But it, like the preparation for the trumpet blowing, waits to unite the following actual plagues into the same (larger) unit “Seven trumpets” at a higher narrative level.

**UL1 The first trumpet: A third of earth burned up (8:7)**

**UL1 The second trumpet: A third of the sea harmed (8:8-9)**

**UL1 The third trumpet: A third of the waters turned bitter (8:10-11)**

**UL1 The fourth trumpet: A third of the heavenly bodies turned dark (8:12)**

The trumpet-blowing events from the first to the fourth seem to be rather short, being presented in only one or two verse(s). However, each of them should be treated as a self-contained unit with its own event, character(s) and place(s). With regard to the range of the plagues, they harm to a larger extent (“a third”), compared with the seal-opening events (“a fourth” of the earth (6:8)). That implies that the two series do not refer to the same event, differing from some interpretations, as mentioned earlier (see 2.1.3.2.5.). Thus, rather than making an effort to identify the mere repetition in two (or three) series of seven events, it would be better to verify that these series exist for the sake of gradual intensification and progression towards the final judgment. As a result, while all three series of septet visions advance the plot of the story with increasing tension, they are cohered in the whole narrative, relating to one of its main themes, “judgment.”

### **UL1 The fifth trumpet: Locusts from the Abyss (8:13-9:12a)**

This section consists of the main body (9:1-11) and the parenthetical parts (8:13, 9:12a) as an inclusion strategy. Why are such parenthetical parts needed? Compared with other plagues, in case a section is quite a long, the speaker may need some awakening strategies to keep the attention of the audience on track. This kind of consideration is important from the point of delivering a story (practical aspect). Three cries of woe by an eagle (8:13) herald the beginning of the fifth trumpet and its end is proclaimed by the eagle: "The first woe has passed" (9:12a).

### **UL1 The sixth trumpet: massacre of one third and the negative response of the rest (9:12b-21)**

This section also uses an inclusion strategy with the proclamation of new woes by the eagle: "behold, two woes are still to come" (9:12b). Some terms at the beginning of the section are repeated at the end in a negative way – that is, "*the golden altar before God*" in 9:13 reverts to "*the demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood*" in 9:21. Therefore this section forms a complete unit.

### **UL1 John's eating the little scroll (10:1-11)**

The introduction part of the section 10:1-3 describes the figure of another mighty angel who is the main actor in this section. This section is linked with the little scroll which forms a theme running through it. The little scroll is referred to in 10:2 and 10:8-10 which correspond to the beginning and end of the section. That implies that this section may be a self-contained unit. Moreover, the command ("do not write it down") by the angel in 10:4 is repeated in a reversal of the command ("you must again prophecy") in 10:11. The fact strengthens that this section can be distinguished as a narrative unit. And it should be noted that " ...that there should be no more delay (10:6c), but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God... should be fulfilled"(10:7). This indicates that the seventh trumpet call is the most decisive moment towards the final judgment. And some words implying the themes –

such as a little scroll, the mystery of God, no more delay - would be a sort of cohering thread while uniting the whole text.

### **UL1 Two witnesses and the beast (11:1-13)**

This section can seem to consist of the following discrete parts: John measuring the temple of God (11:1-2), two witnesses prophesying (11:3-6), the beast from the abyss killing them (11:7-8), the people's response (11:9-10), two witnesses coming up to heaven (11:11-12), the survivors giving glory to God (11:13). However, the parts (or events) are obviously arranged in causal order. And we can find an inclusion strategy at work in the repetition of features at the beginning and end of a unit: "those who worship there" in 11:1 corresponds to "the rest gave glory to the God of heaven" in 11:13, and "the nations" in 11:2 to "their foes" in 11:12, "I was told (by the voice heard from the heaven)" in 11:1 to "they heard a loud voice from heaven" in 11:12. Moreover the relation between "they (their proponent no doubt is the Satan) will trample over the holy city" in 11:2 and "a tenth of the city fell (whose originator obviously is God)" in 11:13, in rather reverse way, seems to be closer to the inverted parallelism. This is why the situation in the introduction is inverted by the time one reaches the conclusion. This is reason enough to identify this section as a narrative unit.

### **UL1 The seventh trumpet (11:14-19)**

After the rather long intercalation has finished, the speaker may feel the necessity to get the audience on the right track of the story. That requires "the warning of the third woe soon to come" in the introduction of this section. And by putting the section ending marker - "there were flashes of lighting, loud noises, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" - at the end of the section, the unit is completed. In view of the main story colour, various plagues, this vision is very different from others, but actually it would be in line with others in terms of its theme. In other words, at the heart of its small parts - praise by loud voices in heaven (11:15), praise by the 24 elders (11:16-18), the ark of the covenant (11:19) - is the prophesy of the fulfillment of God's promise: his judgment and salvation. Thus this section would be a complete narrative section in



terms of its thematic unity as well as in its nature as one part of the trumpet series.

### **UL1 The birth of Jesus (12:1-6)**

This section is obviously related to the story of the birth of Jesus, “who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (12:6). This section begins with “a great portent appeared in heaven” which must be used as a marker to herald a new story. This section contains an inclusion because we find some features from the beginning repeated at the end of the section: “a woman” (12:1; 12:6), “child” (12:2; 12:5). In addition, the word “appear” in 12:1 may function to commence a story and the word “fled” in 12:6 to close it.<sup>6</sup> The woman appeared at 12:1 as a main actor disappears into the wilderness at 12:6 but the dragon as another main actor in this section keeps appearing in the following sections. This fact implies that this section should be cohered into the bigger story at the higher level.

### **UL1 The death of the Jesus on the cross and the ascension (12:7-12)**

12:7-12 is about Jesus’ death on cross.<sup>7</sup> Caird (1966:154) supports this suggestion by expressing Michael’s victory as “simply the heavenly and symbolic counterpart of the earthly reality of the Cross.” Poythress (2000:137) also argues that “we are not to think here of the fall of Satan at the time of creation, but of the defeat of Satan in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.”

As 12:7-9 deals with the actual event, the death of Jesus on the cross, and 12:10-12 introduces the corresponding commentary by means of a loud voice in heaven, the theme or event of this section can be said to be consistent. However, as in the case of

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<sup>6</sup> “appear” vs. “disappear” correspond to “arrival” vs. “departure” in the functional categories suggested by Calloud (1976:17-18).

<sup>7</sup> The casting of Satan out of heaven in 12:7-12 does not seem to be a prehistory fall of angels as posited by some commentators. If this heavenly war story belongs to primordial times, it will disrupt the flow between the previous story around the birth of Jesus and the following story around the church era. Therefore, this may refer to Jesus’ death/victory on the cross rather than to a primordial account of the fall of Satan or an eschatological battle (12:10-11).

the previous unit, the dragon as main actor keeps appearing in the following units, too, so this section needs to be cohered into the bigger story at a higher level.

#### **UL1 The church era (12:13-17)**

Some phrases such as “the rest of her offspring,” “those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus” provide a strong indication of the time setting around this story. No doubt the story should indicate the time after Jesus was born. And the repetition of words at the beginning and at the end of the section indicates that it may be a complete section: “the dragon” and “the woman” are repeated exactly; “the male child” in 12:13 corresponds to “Jesus” in 12:17; from the point of persecution, “he pursued the woman who had born the male child” in 12:13 is analogous to “(he) went off to make war on the rest of her offspring” in 12:17. The dragon in this unit has a close relationship with the beasts in the following sections, which requires this section to be cohered to other units.

#### **UL1 A beast from the sea (13:1-10)**

This section consists of two parts: one relating to a beast from the sea (13:1-8) and a related commentary (13:9-10). Some features at the beginning of the section 13:1-8 are repeated in terms of their related things at its end: “a beast” (13:1) is repeated in 13:8, “ten diadems upon its horn” in 13:1 will be the reason that “all who dwell on earth will worship” in 13:8. And because the commentary in 13:9-10 is closely related to the events caused by the beast from the sea, the two parts can be linked in a narrative unit. However, this beast from the sea is an evil comrade of another beast from the earth appearing in the following section(s), which requires this unit to be united at least with the next at the higher narrative unit level (UL2).

#### **UL1 Another beast from the earth (13:11-18)**

This section also consists of two parts: the features of another beast from the earth (13:11-17) and a related commentary (13:18). Both of them are concerned with what

“another beast” does, so they can form a narrative unit as a complete episode. It is noteworthy that the beast in this section is a parody of the Lamb when it lets people worship the satanic forces (13:15); when it causes those who will not worship its image to be slain (13:15); when it causes all to be marked on the right hand or the forehead (13:16), so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark (13:17).<sup>8</sup> This means this unit needs to be contrasted with others (related to the Lamb) at a global story level.

### **UL1 Salvation: The vision of the Lamb and 144,000 (14:1-5)**

This section has an inclusion for which we can find common features at the beginning and the end of the section. For example, “the Lamb” (14:1) is repeated at 14:4, “144,000” (14:1) corresponds to “first fruits” (14:4), “his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (14:1) implies “these have been redeemed from mankind for God and the Lamb” (14:4). This inclusion makes this section a complete narrative unit. And the theme “salvation” is one of the themes of the whole text, so that this section also should cohere with other unit(s) at higher narrative levels.

### **UL1 Eternal gospel (14:6-13)**

This section also has common features at the beginning and at the end of the section which delimit an inclusion. For example, “an eternal gospel” in 14:6 is reinterpreted as “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” in 14:12 or “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth” in 14:13; “proclaim to those who dwell on earth” in 14:6 is transformed into “write this (in order to let them know)” in 14:13; “the hour of his judgment has come” in 14:7 may be a source of “a call for the endurance of the

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<sup>8</sup> Here obviously the beast can be said to parody Jesus: each of the matters mentioned above corresponds to “**worship God**” in 19:10, 22:9 and “if any body’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was **thrown into the lake of fire**” in 20:15, 21:8 (vs. “...to causes those who will not **worship the image** of the beast to **be slain**” in 13:15); “do not harm the earth or sea or the trees, till we have **sealed** the servants of our God upon their foreheads” in 7:3 (vs. “... to be **marked** on the right hand or the forehead” in 13:16); “let him who desires take the water of life without **price**” in 22:17 (vs. “no one can **buy or sell** unless he has the mark...” in 13:17). Additionally It parodies Elijah (1King 18:38), “making **fire** come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men” in (13:13) and so preparing the way for the false Messiah. The first beast, whose **mortal wound** was healed, also may be a parody of Jesus who **died** on the cross, **resurrected** from the tomb and ascended into heaven.



saints” in 14:12. This would be enough to make this section a complete narrative unit. Thematically this section also needs to cohere with others.

### **UL1 Symbolic action concerning “harvesting at the end day” (14:14-20)**

This section can separate the first part “harvesting by Jesus himself” as a symbolic action to save his people (14:14-16) from the latter part “gathering of the vintage by an angel” as another symbolic action to take revenge on the evil ones (14:17-20). However, in that this episode will take place at the same time (as the great day of their wrath in 6:17), two discrete parts can be united into a narrative unit. Moreover, they can be viewed as a binary opposition “victory vs. defeat”<sup>9</sup> which are functionally united in a section to provide a complete narrative unit. As its theme is in line with theme(s) of the whole text “salvation and judgment,” its cohering relationship with other units should be considered.

## **Seven Bowls**

### **UL1 Heavenly liturgy for seven bowls (15:1-16:1)**

The three series of seven visions all begin with the heavenly liturgy in front of the throne, as above (5:1-14, 8:2-6). It is certain that all kinds of events on the earth can occur by confirmation from God on the throne. This recalls one of the main themes that runs the text: “God rules over the world.” Such a theme should be used as a strong cohering thread to unite quite a number of units into the whole unit, the whole text.

Section 15:1-16:1 seems to be a complete narrative unit, having several obvious repetitions at its beginning and end - that is, “the seven angels,” “the wrath of God” in 15:1 repeated in 16:1<sup>4</sup> and “seven plagues” in 15:1 that are transformed into “seven bowls” in 16:1. This inclusion which parenthesizes the heavenly liturgy for emptying the seven bowls, as the introductory part of the actual plagues, makes this section a

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<sup>9</sup> Calloud (1976:17-18) explains “victory vs. defeat” as end-product of the function “confrontation.”

complete unit. But it, as a preparation for the emptying of the bowls, waits to unite the following actual plagues into the same (larger) unit at a higher narrative level.

**UL1 The first bowl: Foul and evil sores (16:2)**

**UL1 The second bowl: The sea turned into blood (16:3)**

**UL1 The third bowl (16:4-7)**

- (a) The sea turned into blood (16:4)
- (b) Response of the angel of water (16:5-6) and the altar (16:7)

**UL1 The fourth bowl (16:8-9)**

- (a) Plague on the sun (16:8).
- (b) Response of people (who refused to repent and give him glory) (16:9)

**UL1 The fifth bowl (16:10-11)**

- (a) Plague on the throne of the beast (16:10a).
- (b) Response of people (who did not repent of their deeds) (16:10b-11)

**UL1 The sixth bowl (16:12-16)**

- (a) Plague on the Euphrates (16:12)
- (b) Response of the kings of the whole world (16:13-16) including  
“beatitude” (16:15)

**UL1 The seventh bowl: the completion of God’s wrath (16:17-21)**

- (a) The proclamation of “the completion” from the throne (16:17)
- (b) Response of men (who cursed God) because of a natural disaster &  
the collapse of the great city (16:18-21)

While the first two bowl-pouring events are written of in just one verse, the rest of them comprise more than two verses that consist of the plague and the response to it. Although the sixth seems to be a little different, in that “three foul spirits,” in addition to the plague poured by “the angel” from God, induce the kings of the world to respond to it, it can be said that the sixth plague section also has the response on the part of people. As in the case of seven seals or seven trumpets, each of bowl-pouring events should be treated as a self-contained unit with its own event, character(s), location(s).

The relation between the three series of septet visions is noteworthy when we try to find

coherence in the text. As I mentioned earlier, rather than making an effort to find mere repetition in the events of two and three series, it would be better to recognize that these series reveal gradual intensification and progression toward the final judgment. As a result, while all three series of seven visions help to further the plot of the story with gradually increasing tension,<sup>10</sup> it will be seen that they correlate to each other and cohere at higher narrative level(s), relating to one of the main themes, “judgment.”

### **Supplementary Visions as an Addendum**

#### **UL1 Vision “the judgment of the great harlot” (17:1-18)**

As one of the seven angels say to John “I will show you the judgment of the great harlot,” the theme of this vision naturally can be called “the judgment of the great harlot.” Moreover there is an obvious inclusion, the repetition of some features from the beginning at the end of the section: “the great harlot” of 17:1 and “the woman” of 17:3,4 and “the great, mother of harlots” of 17:5 are repeated in “the woman” of 17:15,16,18; “many waters” of 17:1 is explained in 17:15 (“the waters ...are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues”); her judgment referred to in 17:1 is realized at 17:16-17; “the kings of the earth” of 17:1 is expressed as “their royal power” in 17:17; “ten horns” of 17:3 reappears in 17:16; “a beast” of 17:3 turns up again in 17:16, and so on. These indicate that this section can be regarded as a complete unit.

#### **UL1 Proclamation of “the fall of Babylon” (18:1-24)**

The theme of this section is “the fall of Babylon.” The section has triple confirmation:

- (a) Proclamation - “the fall of Babylon” and her plagues by “another angel” (18:1-3), with urging by another voice from heaven for his people to come out of Babylon (18:4-8);
- (b) Mourning of the result by the world – by the kings (18:9-10), the merchants (18:11-

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<sup>10</sup> The range and strength of the plague extends increasingly as it proceeds from the seal series through the trumpet series to the bowl series. They respectively harm a fourth (6:8), a third (8:7,8,9,10,12, 9:1518), and all (16:3).



17a), and all seamen (18:17b-19)

(c) Symbolizing action for “the fall of Babylon” (18:21-24)

This means that this section can be thematically united to make a complete narrative unit. And the announcement “fallen is Babylon the great” at the beginning (18:2) is repeated at the end of section (“So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down” (18:21)) to make a inclusion. This supports that this section can be a complete narrative unit.

### **UL1 Proclamation of God’s “salvation and judgment” (19:1-10)**

The theme of this section is God’s “salvation and judgment.” The section has triple confirmation:

(a) Proclamation - God’s salvation and judgment 19:1-5: the voice of a great multitude in heaven (19:1-3), the 24 elders and the four living creatures (19:4), “a voice from the throne” (19:5)

(b) Praising the result by the voice of a great multitude: God’s reign (19:6) and the marriage of the Lamb to have come (19:7-8)

(c) Responding action by the angel and John: The angel telling John to write it and that “These are true words of God.” (19:9), and John nearly worshipping the angel (19:10).

This indicates that this triple part can be united thematically to make a complete narrative unit. Praising and worshipping God by a great multitude (19:1-3), by the heavenly being (19:4-5) are ended with the command “worship god” in the epiphany (19:10). Because of their similar connotation, they makes a inclusion, which support that this section can be a complete narrative unit.

### **UL1 A rider on a white horse and his armies’ campaign and victory over their enemies (19:11-21)**

This section, as one episode, tells that Jesus and his armies will defeat the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies:

(a) A rider on a white horse and his armies’ campaign (19:11-16)

(b) An angel commanding all the birds to eat the flesh of all men (19:17-18)

(c) The victory of the rider on the horse (and his army) over the beast and the kings with their armies (19:19–21)

“He who sat upon [white horse]” of 19:11 is repeated at the end of the section, “him who sits upon the horse”(19:21). They, “victory” (19:11-18) and “defeat” (19:19-21), can also be viewed as a binary opposition, which are functionally united in a section to provide a complete narrative unit.

However, the war will not end until their head “the dragon” is seized. Thus this section needs to be extended into a larger unit at a higher level. It is noteworthy that “the angel gathered vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God” at 14:19 but it is not told “who will tread the wine press.” Now 19:15 says that Jesus himself “will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.” This also suggests that this section should be cohered at the global level.

#### **UL1 Satan sealed for a thousand years (20:1-3)**

This section deals with the event of an angel throwing the dragon into the pit not to deceive the nations. Binding (20:1-2) and loosing it (20:3) as functionally binary opposition make this section a complete narrative unit. However ending with “After that he should be loosed for a little while,” indicates that this section waits to be extended to a larger unit at a higher level.

#### **UL1 “The first resurrection” and Saints’ reign for a thousand years (20:4-6)**

The section is concerned with “the first resurrection,” some features of which are repeated at the beginning and the end: for example, “they came to life again and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (20:4c) which corresponds to both “he who shares in the first resurrection” (20:6a) and “they shall reign with him a thousand years” (20:6c). This inclusion strategy makes the section a complete unit.

#### **UL1 The judgment of the devil after the millennium (20:7-10)**

Thematically, this section deals with the final judgment of the devil after the millennium. Satan who was loosed from his prison at the beginning of the section (20:7) was bound in it again at the end of the section (20:10). These, functionally binary oppositions, make the section a complete narrative unit. Nevertheless this unit firstly needs to be related to the unit of 20:1-3, because they are concerned with the judgment of the same devil, both before and after the millennium. Moreover, as the final judgment of the devil leads to the recompense to the churches, this section needs to be contrasted to the other part(s) near or far from this unit.

#### **UL1 The final judgment and “the second death” (20:11-15)**

Thematically, this section deals with the final judgment of those whose names are not found written in the book of life. The judgment by “him who sat upon [a great white throne] (20:11)” at the beginning of the section functionally corresponds to the punishment of “any one whose name was not found written in the book of life (20:15)” to make an inclusion in this section. This verifies that this section can be a complete narrative unit. It is noteworthy that the term “the second death” reappears at the end of the next section (21:1-8). This kind of fact indicates that this section should be bound up with other sections under the same theme at a higher narrative level.

#### **UL1 Introduction of the holy city as “Paradise Regained” (21:1-8)**

This section introduces the holy city, and consists of two parts:

- (a) Visionary introduction - The new heaven and earth and the holy city (21:1-2)
- (b) Auditory introduction - The dwelling of God being with men (21:3-4); God making all things new, and His commanding John to write this (21:5); God’s self-prediction (21:6a) and His blessing (21:6b-7) and curse (21:8)

Now this section, as a introductory part, needs its body, which requires this unit to be cohered to the following section(s).

#### **UL1 The outside features of the holy city (21:9-27)**



This section draws the outside features of the holy city from a great, high mountain: (a) John enraptured in the Spirit to a great, high mountain (21:9-10), (b) its radiance (21:11) and its wall (21:12-14), (c) the measurement of the city (21:15-17), (d) The material of the wall, its foundations, its twelve gates, and its street (21:18-21), (e) Commentary regarding the feature of the holy city 21:22-27. Its outside features needs to be added to by its inside features for the complete description of the holy city, which indicates that this section should be cohered to other part(s) at a larger unit level.

### **UL1 The inside features of the holy city (22:1-5)**

This section deals with the inside features of the holy city – that is, the river of the water of life; the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit (22:1-2), and the life of His servants in it (22:3-5). This section should be added to the two preceding units to describe the features of the holy city fully. This means that this section is a complete narrative unit but needs to be cohered with a larger unit(s).

### **UL1 Epilogue of the whole text (22:6-17)**

- A 22: 6 (The Lord has **sent** his angel to show his servant what must soon take place)
- B 22: 7(-9) (I am **coming** soon. Blessed he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book)
- C 22: 10-11 (**Do not seal up** the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near)
- B' 22:12-13; 14-15 (I am **coming** soon; the reward and the punishment)
- A' 22:16-17 (I Jesus have **sent** my angel to you with this testimony for the churches)

This part seems to be quite complicated to identify the complete unit. It, however, has an obvious inclusion as a sign of a complete narrative unit. “And he said to me, ...and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets (a), has sent his angel (b) to show his servants (c) what must soon take place (d)” (22:6) at the beginning of this unit is

repeated almost word for word by “I Jesus (a’) have sent my angel (b’) to you (c’) with this testimony for the churches (d’)” (22:16) at the end of it. The difference between two sentences is just that between the indirect speech and the direct speech.

The inner inclusion of this unit also appears between 22:7 and 22:12-15. If we take a close look at their correspondence, we can find that there are repetitions between them (22:7 vs. 22:12-13, 14-15), though in a little scattering way. That is, “And behold, I am coming soon.” (22:7a) is repeated verbatim in 22:12; “Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (22:7b) is repeated in “Blessed are those who wash their robes” (22:14a) though in a little different way. Whether or not for him to keep the words of the prophecy of this book (22:7b) leads to his reward and the punishment (22:12, 22:14-15).

The event of John falling down to worship the angel in 22:8 reminds us of the event in 1:17 or 19:10. John tries to verify his own authority and the authority of his words as originating from God through this epiphany event which is like what Paul experienced near to Damascus (Acts 9:3-19, 22:5-16, 26:13-18). Seemingly through this epiphany John mentions himself and his brethren the prophets as an example of the faithful witness to introduce how “those who keep the words of this book” live (22:9). It reminds them of 1:9 which is already mentioned about his witness and his present situation: “I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9). It also helps to cohere the beginning part and the end part of the text.

This epilogue repeats the purpose of revelation (1:1 vs. 22:6) and the beatitude of him who keeps the words of the prophecy of the book (1:3 vs. 22:7) in the prologue. This repetition indicates the starting point of the obvious epistolary epilogue. And as far as the epilogue reflects the prologue, they function to wrap the whole text in a parenthesis to make it into a unified one like the coats of an onion.

#### **UL1 Epistolary postscript in the epilogue (22:18-21)**

Until 22:17, John, as reporter, tells the story but from 22:18, John, as writer of letter, is about to finish the letter. In this sense, 22:18-21 may be said to correspond to the epistolary postscript.

The ending including epiphany (22: 6 - 21) of the text reflects the introduction followed by epiphany (1:1 - 20) to a great degree but in reverse order as follows, which can also underscore the demarcation of this section (cf. chapter 4.5.2.2.6.). The words reminiscent of chap.1 start from 22:6, reporting the words of the divine beings (angel, Jesus, Spirit), which become the closing outer frame. But 22:18 changes back to John's own voice, which means that the following (22:18-21) corresponds to the epistolary postscript.

- (a) Title (1:1a)
- (b) What must soon take place & the testimony of Jesus (1:1b-2)
- (c) Those who keep the prophecy (1:3)
- (d) The Communicators (1:4-8) followed by Epiphany (1:9-20)
- (d') The Communicators (22:6-17) including Epiphany (22:8-9)
- (c') Warning of John: Those to change the prophecy (22:18-19)
- (b') He (Jesus) who testifies & "Surely I am coming soon" (22:20)
- (a') Colophon: Blessing to addressee (22:21)

From the identification of the basic narrative units, it seems obvious that these units are ready for grouping into the larger narrative units by using various integrating strategies. In the next sections, based on these narrative units (UL1), I will continue to find the narrative units on higher levels until we get a global narrative unit of the Apocalypse of John, which means that the book has an integral unity.



## **4.5. Higher Narrative Unit Levels (UL2,3,4)**

### **4.5.1. Narrative Unit Level Two (UL2)**

For greater comprehension, I set out the narrative outline (see 4.6. summary), prepared according to the various narrative strategies or principles for integrating the small narrative units at the higher unit levels that I have presented. The following things need to be noted when the integrating principles are applied:

#### **1:1-8 and 22:6-21 are UL 3 rather than UL1**

Firstly, UL1 was established in preparation for integrating the small units at the higher unit levels UL2, UL3... to ULn. The narrative units at UL1 in fact can be referred to as Narrative Basic Units. It is because each basic unit is so self-governed that it may be a small but complete action or event by itself. Sometimes, the level term BUL (“Basic Unit Level”) is preferable to the term level “UL1,” because a smallest unit at UL1 can be moved up to the higher level without successive steps when it has the same qualification as the other units at the higher levels. For example, in the case of the Prologue 1:1-3, Prescript 1:4-7, Epilogue 22:6-17, and Postscript 22:18-2, they were identified as smallest narrative units at UL1, but now they must be placed on UL3 because their introduction or conclusion to the story are in equal with other categories at UL3 such as Setting, Complication, Resolution, Evaluation, and Moral.

#### **7:1-17 and 10:1 – 11:13 are UL 2 rather than UL1**

Secondly, in the case of interruptions such as the section of 7:1-17 and the section of 10:1-11:13 at UL1, they will be weighed according to the appropriate level. The section of 7:1-17, as the interpretation of the seal-opening series, provides the answer to the question raised by the seven seals, especially for the sixth seal (6:12-17). In other words, despite earthly plagues and God’s wrath, the question “The great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?” of the sixth seal needs to be answered, so the hearers receive the answer from the heavenly court (7:1-17). This is why the

interruption, as a heavenly response to the question of the seven seals as a whole, should be placed on the second level (UL2), as equal to the seal-opening series. On the other hand, the section of 10:1 - 11:13 tells of the last “witness (or prophecy),” in the relation to the lack of repentance of people with regard to the previous plagues announced by the trumpets, (“the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols ..., nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts” (9:20-21)).

As a response to that, there is the symbolic action between the angel and John: John takes the little scroll from the hand of the angel and eats it. Now “you [John] must again prophecy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (10:11) because “there should be no more delay” (10:6). In the meanwhile, the last attempt of the two witnesses to prophesy to the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations (11:3-12), after the symbolic action of measuring the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there (11:1-2), leads to “the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.” Thus the unit level of 10:1-11:13, as the response to the trumpet-blowing series, should be equal to the level of the trumpet plagues (UL2).

### **Narrative Unit Level Two**

Finally, the rest of the narrative units corresponding to narrative unit level two (UL2) can be identified or ranked easily, because they can be grouped among adjacent units that fall under the same theme or event:

#### **UL 2   2:1-3:22; 4:1-11; 5:1 – 8:1; 8:2 – 11:19; 15:1 – 16:1**

All the letters - to the church in Ephesus (2:1-7), to the church in Smyrna (2:8-11), to the church in Pergamum (2:12-17), to the church in Thyatira (2:18-29), to the church in Sardis (3:1-6), to the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13), and to the church in Laodicea (3:14-22) at UL1 - are mustered under the theme “The earthly setting: Messages to the seven churches (2:1-3:22)” at UL2.

On the other hand, as “The heavenly setting: God rules all the events (4:1-11)” is the counterpart of “The earthly setting: Messages to the seven churches (2:1-3:22)” at UL2, the part (4:1-11) should belong to UL2.

It is noteworthy that the three septet-visions (seal visions of 5:1-8:1, trumpet visions of 8:2-11:19, and bowl visions of 15:1-16:1) start with the “heavenly liturgy” as preparation for each vision. And, according to those who propose “recapitulation theory,” though they seem to follow a similar pattern, this is not mere repetition but they are applied purposefully for the sake of intensification and progression (see 2.1.3.2.5) - that is, one fourth harmed by plagues in seal visions, one third by plagues in trumpet visions and the pouring-out plagues to all things in bowl visions. It seems reasonable that each series of three septet visions can be grouped under its own theme, that is, “Seven seals,” “Seven trumpets,” “Seven bowls.”

#### **UL2 12:1-17; 13:1-18; 14:1-20**

The section of 12:1-17 shows “the origin of the conflict between the church and her opponents” as a flashback. Under this theme (or event) three smallest units can be grouped at UL1: The birth of Jesus (12:1-6); The death of Jesus (12:7-12); The church era 12:13-17.

The section of 13:1-18 tells of “beasts making war on the faithful in the end time to kill the saint,” as a parody of Jesus on the great day. The event occurred by “two beasts” - one from the sea, another from the earth - can be introduced under this theme.

The section of 14:1-20 describes “144,000 redeemed from the earth” as harvested at the end of time. This part at UL2 consists of three smallest units at UL1: The Lamb and 144,000 (14:1-5), Eternal gospel (14:6-13), and The symbolic action concerning salvation and judgment (14:14-20).

These three events (12:1-17; 13:1-18; 14:1-20) with the seven bowls (15:1 - 16:1) correspond to the resolution part (at UL3) of the whole narrative, which I shall explain



in detail later. Together, they can be a complete (independent) story - "a sub-story in a story" - because 12:1 to 16:21 is shown to be so well unified or cohered as to qualify as a complete unit. Thus sub-units that constitutes "Resolution" (UL3) should be placed on UL2.

## **UL2 17:1 - 19:21; 20:1-6; 20:7-15; 21:1 - 22:5**

The section of 17:1-19:21 tells about "the fall of Babylon" as the result of judgment. Under this event (or theme), four smallest units can be listed at UL1: The judgment of the great harlot (17:1-18); Announcement of "the fall of Babylon" (18:1-24); Announcement of God's salvation and judgment (19:1-10); A rider on a white horse and his armies' campaign and victory over their enemies (19:11-21).

The section of 20:1-6 shows "the victory over the dragon and "the first resurrection" resulting from the judgment. This section consists of two smallest units: The dragon sealed for the millennium (20:1-3); The first resurrection (20:4-6).

The section of 20:7-15 describes "the judgment over the dragon and 'the second death'" occurring after the millennium. This part consists of two smallest units: The final judgment of the dragon (20:7-10); The final judgment of those whose names were not found written in the book of life and "The second death" (20:11-15).

The section of 21:1-22:5 tells about "Paradise Regained: The holy city, Jerusalem" as a result of God's action. This section is composed of three units at UL1: The introduction of the holy city (21:1-8); The external features of the holy city, Jerusalem (21:9-14); The internal features of the holy city, Jerusalem (22:1-5).

These four events (17:1-19:21; 20:1-6; 20:7-15; 21:1-22:5) correspond to the evaluation (at UL3) of the whole narrative. Together they probably constitute a complete (independent) unit because 17:1 to 22:5 shows the well established chiastic structure, which will be presented when I deal with UL3 (see 4.5.2.2.5.). Thus all units that form part of "Evaluation" (UL3), as constituents, should be placed on UL2.

### 4.5.2. Narrative Unit Level Three (UL3)

At “narrative unit level three (UL3),” the concept of plot should be applied to the whole narrative and this will show its dynamic structure at the global level. Before this stage (up to UL2), each integration has taken place only among adjacent small units, so that all the effort hitherto can be called to be local but not global.

#### 4.5.2.1. *Various Definitions of Plot*

Various definitions of plot have been produced since Aristotle (Poetics 1450a 6) defined plot as “the arrangement of the incidents.” These definitions can be divided according to two kinds of perspective: one from the point of sequential perspective and the other from the point of functional perspective.

##### (1) The perspective of the sequence between the events

Forster ([1927] 1974:60) defines a story as “a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence,” while a plot is “a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.”<sup>1</sup>

Scholes and Kellogg (1966:207) say that “Plot can be defined as the dynamic, sequential element in narrative literature. Insofar as character, or any other element in narrative, becomes dynamic, it is a part of the plot. Spatial art, which presents its materials simultaneously, or in a random order, has no plot.”

Barr (1995:23-33) maintains that “At the heart of the notion of plot is the idea of a causal connection between events in a sequence.” He means that the cause-and-effect logic binds the incidents together and mandates that one follow the other.

##### (2) The perspective of the functional effect

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<sup>1</sup> He (1974:60) explains it through an example: “‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a story. ‘The king died, and then the queen died *of grief*’ is a plot.” As far as plot is concerned, “time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it.”

Scholes and Kellogg (1966:212) formulate this as follows: "The reader of a narrative can expect to finish his reading having achieved a state of equilibrium – something approaching calm of mind, all passion spent. Insofar as the reader is left with this feeling by any narrative, that narrative can be said to have a plot."

Abrams (1999:224) states that "the plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving *particular artistic and emotional effects* [italics mine]."

The above definitions of plot reveal two things as essential for the plot of a narrative: *causality* between events and their particular *effects*. A plot is distinguishable from the story, a bare synopsis of the temporal order of what happens. When we summarize the story in a literary work, we say that this happens first, then that, then that. However, it is (a) only when we specify how one aspect is related to another by causes and motivations, and (b) in what manner all these are organized so as to achieve their particular effects, that a synopsis begins to be equal to the plot.

### **Various Suggestions of the Plot of the Apocalypse**

#### **(1) Linear Plot**

Many past interpreters tried to compose a linear structure on the book.

According to some radical premillennial believers like Lindsey (1970), the sequence of events which constitutes the End is part of a long sacred history. Thus history is predetermined and may be known by studying biblical prophecy. The sequence of events is revealed in coded form in the book of Revelation.

Walvoord (1966), representative of the dispensationalists, argues that the seals, trumpets and bowl judgments are chronologically sequential, that is, after the seal judgments, come the trumpet judgments and, finally, the bowl judgments. These all occur in the last



three-and-a-half-years of the seven year period of Daniel's 70th week (:950). The end result of this great tribulation is the destruction of Babylon (chaps 17,18). Then Christ will return with the church and set up his kingdom (chaps 19,20).

However, it seems that this kind of interpretation does not prevail any longer. Overall, it is open to several criticisms. Perhaps the most damaging critique is the fact that such an interpretive framework for the book leads to endless speculation and subjectivity in its interpretation. It is simply very difficult to arrive at a consensus in the identification of referents in history for the symbols in the text (Herrick 1997:2).

## (2) Spiral Movement

According to Fiorenza (1985:171), the author combines a repetitious cyclic form with the end-oriented movement of the whole book by integrating the plagues septets into narrative structure. Therefore, the narrative movement can be best illustrated as a *conical spiral moving* from the vision of the Lamb's enthronement to that of the Parousia.<sup>2</sup>

## (3) The Expanding Scope

According to Du Preez (1979:216-218), the narrative plot can be shown by the expanding scope of God's people, the kingdom of God, by degrees as the narrative goes:

Christ (1) >> the seven churches (2-3) >> the twenty-four elders (4:4) >> The 144,000 of the sealed (7:1-8; 14:1-5) >> the woman and the rest of her offspring (12:1-17) >> The twelve tribes of Israel and twelve apostles (21:12-14).

## (4) U-Shape

According to Resseguie (1998:166-192), the Apocalypse has a U-shaped plot that begins with a stable condition (chapters 1,4,5),<sup>3</sup> moves downward into the unstable

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<sup>2</sup> Barr (1995:23-33) notes that the repetitious circular shape reflects the mythic origins of apocalyptic thought, but when Jesus is introduced in the narrative, the closed circle is broken.

<sup>3</sup> He (:166) holds that chapters 2 and 3 reveal instabilities in the churches *on earth*, while chapter 1 shows the stable condition *on earth* and chapter 4 and 5 the stable condition *in heaven*.

condition of the Early Church (chapters 6-19), and finally moves upward to a new stable condition *in heaven and on earth* with the arrival of the new heaven and new earth (chapters 20-22). The U-shaped plot reveals the dynamic development of eschatological events.

(5) Christological Actions (Du Rand 1991: 310-316, cf. Barr 1984:39-50)

The plot of the Apocalypse seems intentionally to evolve the victory of the kingdom of God and to assure this to the readers. "As in a musical composition consisting of different movements, but which still harmonize as a unity, the Apocalypse is also theologically bound together in three Christological movements." Each movement turns on and reveals the saving and judging work of Jesus: in the church (1-3), in the cosmos (4-11) and in history (12-22).

(6) Multi-Level Plot

Boring (1992:702-723) made a fresh attempt to study Christology in the Apocalypse as a narrative mode. He maintains that "Inherent in the idea of Christ is the unfulfilled progression of events in history, at the climax of which Christ comes as its Savior and fulfiller. This idea finds its proper expression in the narrative. Thus, the idea of Christ implies a certain plot: the problem, the action which resolves the problem, and the happy ending" (:702). In his discussion of the narrative Christology of the Apocalypse, Boring mentions the very useful fact that there are four different levels of narration in Revelation (:704): (1) level one; John's/ the Churches' Story, (2) level two; the heavenly Christ's/God's story, (3) level three; the world's story, (4) level four; the narrative Christology of Revelation.

(7) Complex, multilinear sequence

According to Barr (1995:33), "One should not assume that there is only one possible plot, except in the simplest of stories. In fact, stories range over a spectrum from simple, unilinear, tightly plotted sequences (a joke) to complex, multilinear, sequences wherein any number of possible connections between events may be inferred. The Apocalypse is a complex story and no one reading will ever imagine all the possible connections between incidents."

4.5.2.2. *UL3 and Five Typical Narrative Categories of Van Dijk (1980)*

4.5.2.2.1. **General**

Freytag's Pyramid (1887)

Since the time of Aristotle a plot has been said to require the basic elements of “a beginning, a middle and an end” (1450b 27): The beginning initiates the main action in a way which makes us look forward to something more; the middle presumes what has gone before and requires something to follow; and the end follows from what has gone before but requires nothing more; we feel satisfied that the plot is complete.

Since then, these elements have been defined in more detail and variety. One of the most famous schemes would be that of the German critic, Freytag (1887:374-394).

He introduced an analysis of plot that is known as Freytag's Pyramid. He described the typical plot of a five-act play in terms of rising action, climax, and falling action, as illustrated in the diagram below.

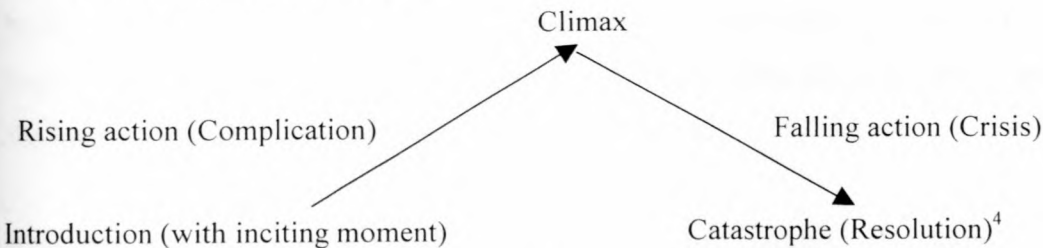


Fig. 6

Although this pattern has been widely used in various ways, the total pattern that he described only applies to a limited number of plays because it lacks of the general

<sup>4</sup> Concerning naming this stage of the plot, modern literary critics prefer the term “Resolution” to the term “Catastrophe.” This is why Catastrophe is usually applied to tragedy only; a more general term for this precipitating final scene, which is applied to both comedy and tragedy, is the Denouement (French for “unknotting”): the action or intrigue ends in success or failure for the protagonist, the conflicts are settled, the mystery is solved, or the misunderstanding cleared away. A frequently used alternative term for the



appropriateness to all plays.

Van Dijk's fivefold scheme (1980)

By studying the Apocalypse, we realize that it has a very complex scheme. The plot consists of characters performing actions and it also involves conflict, a struggle between two opposing forces. Therefore it is reasonable to think that its plot, starting with "setting," should at least have "complication" and "resolution" stages as its main categories, dynamic and suspenseful. We, however, need a more refined scheme than the simple scheme of Freytag, one reflecting the relevant characteristics of the narrative plot of the Apocalypse. Van Dijk's fivefold scheme of the superstructure of a narrative appears to be preferable to any other scheme, as it consists of A. Setting, B. Complication, C. Resolution, D. Evaluation, and E. Coda/Moral.

#### **4.5.2.2.2. Setting (1:9-4:11) with preparation (1:1-8)**

The first typical category of narratives is the **setting**. Settings in general feature descriptions of the original situation, the time and place of the various episodes, a description of the main character(s) involved in these episodes, and possibly further background information about the social or historical context of the events. However such settings may be very brief or even deleted when they are supposed to be known to the hearer (Van Dijk 1980:113-114, cf. Alter 1981:80).

Although settings commence the narrative proper, stories also have all kinds of **preparatory expressions** preceding them, such as title, attention mark. We do not count them among the proper narrative categories because they have a more general communicative function.

#### **The Preparatory Statement (1:1-8)**

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outcome of a plot is the Resolution.

According to Van Dijk's explanation of the plot of the Apocalypse, the first element is the *beginning* of the narrative (1:1-8). The preparatory part provides enough "general information" for the audience to follow the main narrative discourse. The especially notable constituents are (1) the title, (2) the attention markers, (3) the principle characters, (4) their (meaningful) relationship with the audience, (5) the geographical location (Alter 1981:80; Van Dijk 1980:114):

- (1) The title of the narrative discourse is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"(1:1a);
- (2) The beatitude in 1:3 "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near" would be enough of an attention marker to draw the attention of the audience in a situation of worship.
- (3) The principal characters of the narrative are introduced as God, Jesus Christ, his angel, and John, who also play the roles of the principal enunciators in each narrative segment (1:1).
- (4) Mentioning their particular relationship with the audience makes the hearers listen to this discourse more carefully, and makes them align themselves with the actions and ideas of the main characters in the narrative (1:5-6).

### **Linking the previous stories and starting in the middle of things**

Firstly, and without doubt, all the books of New Testament were written to center on the work of Jesus to "save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21; Rev 1:6). It is therefore worth noting the linkage between this book and the other New Testament books, especially Gospels and Acts as the narratives of Jesus' saving work. As we can know from Acts 1:1-2 ("In the first book ... I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, ..."), the Gospel of Luke, like the rest of Gospels, is written on Jesus' work on the earth, while the Acts of the Apostles tells about his apostles' acts as the witnesses of Jesus after his ascension. The apostles' witnessing acts will continue until the end of the world when Jesus comes again from heaven. Now we are looking at the Apocalypse of John, which deals with the successive story following the Acts of apostles, until Jesus' second coming and his final salvation and judgment as the completion of the Gospels.

The introductory section, in this way, tries to provide a link with the previous stories: “...from Jesus Christ *the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead*, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who *loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...*” (1:5).

Secondly, the opening section of the Apocalypse mentions a representative event (Jesus’ salvific act on the earth (1:5)), related to and closely preceding the event which precipitates the central situation or conflict. In this way, the narratives often plunges us “in[to] the middle of things,” at a critical point in the action.<sup>5</sup> The same is true of the Apocalypse, which commences in the middle of the whole salvation story of Jesus, from Jesus’ public works on earth (1:5) and his apostles’ witness to him (1:9) to “what must soon take place” at the end of days (1:1). On the other hand, if we have to apply the story of Jesus’ work to a much greater extent, from the beginning to the last days of the world, then again the structural beginning (sometimes called the “initiating action,” or “point of attack”) can be said to start “in the middle of things” (Abrams 1999:226-7). By this kind of literary strategy, the narrative, although its events focus on “Jesus’ salvation and judgment (and the apostles’ witness) at the end of days, by extension encompasses all time from the creation and its corruption to its restoration at the end of the world.

## **The Setting (1:9-4:11)**

### **1. Epiphany (1:9-20): Shifting from the general statements to the main narrative**

This event proceeds to the main narrative, after general statements. That is, the epiphany leads John into the revelatory vision (the contents he has to deliver) starting with earthly and heavenly settings. The prominent features of Jesus Christ as the main character in

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<sup>5</sup> Abrams gives an example of this: “Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* opens with a street fight between the servants of two great houses; the exposition of essential prior matters – the feud between the Capulets and Montagues. Shakespeare weaves it rapidly and skillfully into the dialogue of the startling initial scene” (1999:226).



this entry into the vision appear as fragments in the letters to the seven churches. The description of Jesus Christ foreshadows how he, as the Lord of the judgment and salvation, acts in the rest of story.

## 2. The Earthly Setting (2:1-3:22)

### (1) Situation

This part consists of the seven letters, through which we are made aware of the situation of the churches and their members in Asia Minor. Their situation is **unstable**, because of threats from both without<sup>6</sup> and within. A clue to this is given through expressions such as: false apostles (2:2), the Nicolaitans (2:6), your tribulation and poverty (2:9), the slander of Jews (2:9), the death of Antipas (2:13), some who hold the teaching of Balaam (2:14) and of the Nicolaitans (2:15), the woman Jezebel (2:20), many people who have soiled their garments (3:4), Jews who lie (3:9), many Christians in Laodicea who are lukewarm (3:16), including the banishment of John himself (1:9).<sup>7</sup> The prevailing situation seems to be altogether inalterable.

### (2) The setting of time and place

The earthly setting, Asia Minor, can be indicated by the location of the seven churches (2:1, 8,12,18; 3:1, 7,14), including the place of John's banishment (1:9). When we consider words representing time (past, present, future) in this narrative, they should be interpreted according to the time this book was written, probably at the end of the emperor Domitian's rule over the Roman Empire.<sup>8</sup> We must, however, note the "sudden disordered time settings" away from the standard time, which happen primarily in the interrupted events, or the heavenly events, such as "prolepsis" (flash forward), "analepsis" (flashback) and "achrony" (where chronological location to other incidents

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<sup>6</sup> According to Collins (1984), there were elements of crisis in the social environment of Christians in Asia Minor at the end of Domitian's reign that are probably reflected in the Apocalypse – conflict with the Jews, mutual antipathy toward neighboring gentiles, conflict over wealth both within the society of Asia Minor and between Rome and the eastern empire, and the somewhat precarious relations between Christian organizations and Roman officials ( :84-99).

<sup>7</sup> I may as well delay the detailed discussion about the unstable situation to "The Function of the Narrative" of the next chapter, in order to concentrate here on identifying the narrative structure of the Apocalypse.

is ambiguous and impossible to specify).

### (3) The main character(s) and their opponents

This part introduces Jesus Christ as the main character in 2:1, 8,12,18; 3:1,7,14 and his followers (as his helpers), like Antipas (“his witness, his faithful one”) (2:13) and the faithful or the conquerors (2:7,11,17,26-28; 3:5,12,21) in each letter. Other important characters also appear, such as Satan or the devil (as Jesus’ opponent) in 2:10,13,24 and his followers, like Balak “who hold the teaching of Balaam” (2:14); false apostles (2:2); the Nicolaitans (2:6); Jews (“a synagogue of Satan”) (2:9; 3:9); some who hold the teaching of Balaam (2:14) and of the Nicolaitans (2:15); the woman Jezebel (2:20); and many people who have soiled their garments (3:4).

## 3. Transported to the heavenly court “in the Spirit” (4:2)

The focus of events shifts to the heavenly (stable) setting which is contrasted with the earthly (unstable) situation. The removal of John through the rapture of the Spirit indicates the vast gap or difference between the two worlds. However, as events unfold, the stable state in heaven is to be realized on the unstable earth ( “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”).

## 4. The Heavenly Setting (4:1-11)

### (1) Situation

This part shows “how it is” and “what is happening” in the heavenly court. The heavenly world is the place where “one seated on the throne” rules – that is, the will of God is completely fulfilled there. Therefore, there is no tension and conflict between opposite forces as on the earth. Instead, the heavenly court is shown in a perfectly **stable state**: twenty-four elders are arranged around “the throne” (4:4), the seven spirits of God before the throne (4:5), four living creatures round the throne, one each side of the throne (4:6). The heavenly beings are praising and worshiping God. Nothing breaks

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<sup>8</sup> Discussion of this time setting is also postponed to Chapter 6: Narrative Function of the Apocalypse.

into this atmosphere. Therefore 4:1-11 probably presents the heavenly setting to provide the static information about the well-ordered situation or context preceding the events, with a description of the main character(s).

## (2) Character(s)

Here the most important character is “one who is seated on his throne” (4:2). He, by implication, is the initiator of all heavenly and earthly events. When any one breaks even one of his creations to be displaced from the established order, he (now as a restorer) willingly tries to heal and restore it to the original (stable) state because they should exist by the will of God, the creator of all things (“they existed and were created by his will” (4:11)). John is enraptured and transported into the heavenly court to see “what must take place after this” (4:1), to witness God’s story of restoration.

## (3) Time and Place

We can not think of the heavenly time and place in which God resides apart from his attributes. The time is eternal because for the Lord “who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev 4:8), “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2Pet 3:8). The time accommodating the “One who is seated on the throne” is eternal, so that past, present, and future coexist.

The place is completely stable (“there is no variation or shadow due to change” (Jas 1:17)) because “by thy will they existed and were created”(Rev 4:11). He as “the Lord God almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (4:8) must be the originator of “what must take place after this” (4:1) as well as past and current things, according to his good will. And any event that occurs on earth seems to depend on the decisions of the “heavenly court” in which the throne stood (4:2).

## **Two Levels of Narrative Plot and Homologue**

Thompson (1990:78) defines “homologue” as follows:

The characteristics of certain humans correspond to the characteristics of divine



creatures or divine places; that is, godly humans have features homologous to divine creatures or divine places or even god himself. Homologous relations are best known from the field of biology, where homologies refer to similar structures with a common origin, for example, the wing of a bat and the foreleg of a mouse....In the book of Revelation, one finds homologies other than in the microcosm/macrocosm relationship. Thus, I [Thompson] use the term to refer to any correspondence of structure, position, or character in the different dimensions of John's world. These homologous relations contribute to the blurring of boundaries in the apocalypse.

Here we have to notice that two levels of narrative plot, one for earthly events and the other for heavenly events, should fork into two story lines from the beginning of the narrative. However as the narrative goes through complication to resolution, the earthly and heavenly events converge at the end of narrative by means of "New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2). Nevertheless, during that time, the heavenly events and earthly events influence each other, are closely related to each other.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, every event teleologically moves toward the complete homologue ("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"), the "stable state." We show the narrative levels of plot roughly:

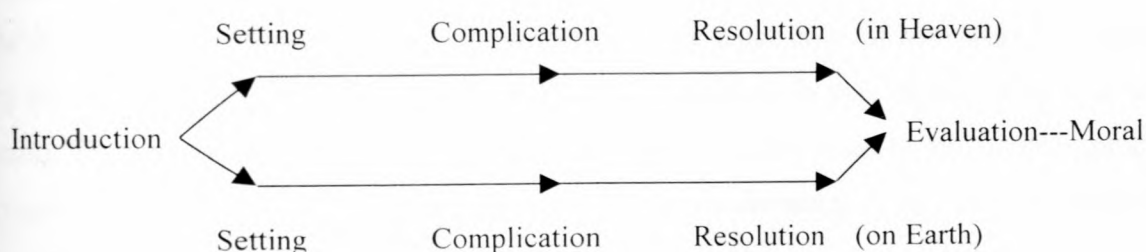


Fig. 7

#### 4.5.2.2.3. Complication (5:1-11:19)

Van Dijk (1980:113-114) wrote that:

<sup>9</sup> For example, the prayer of the saints on earth (6:17) initiates the heavenly answering (7:1-17); the Lamb (a heavenly being) opening one of the seven seals (6:1) initiates the event on the earth (6:2); in three sets of seven plagues, the heavenly liturgy (5:1-14; 8:2-6; 15:1-16:1) precedes each of the seven

After a certain setting, a story typically brings an account of “what happened” in that setting. Hence, the following category, that of *complication*, contains an event or an action. The semantic constraint, however, is that this may not be any event or action, but it must be something that is worth telling in the first place: it must be a **“narratable” event**.<sup>10</sup> Often, then a complication has a content representing **something that breaks the established norms, routines, expectations, balanced situation, or normal plans or goals of participants**. Typically, this is an event that is dangerous, funny, or simply unexpected for the participants.<sup>11</sup>

What is complicating in one period or culture may not be so in others, so that we often do not understand the “point” of stories from other cultures. What is seen as a deviation from “normal” conditions also is culture dependent (Van Dijk 1980:114): e.g. from the point of view of people at the time (especially the suffering Christians of the Asia Minor), the Roman Empire seemed to be strong, steady, unwavering, long-lasting, and indestructible. In this section of the narrative a process of amelioration and opposition/degradation is initiated (Via 1980:204). This will build up until the resolution or goal is arrived at in the final section of the narrative.

Nobody could have imagined that the strong Empire, Babylon, could be destroyed. The Apocalypse, however, indicates that Babylon began to lose its stability. This came about the moment when “the Lamb took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne” (5:7). It seemed to be stable until the Lamb was qualified to take the scroll. Then she was not stable any longer. The complication is set in and continued; the kingdom in control of Satan begins its degradation; its destruction will be confirmed in the “Resolution” stage.

In fact God’s power to disrupt the seeming stability of Babylon is implicit in the song of praise and worship of the heavenly beings: he wants to restore the unstable world to a stable world, because “thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were

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plagues, etc.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., just opening a door, a leaf falling, or taking a walk, in general does not qualify, because they are events or actions that happen so often and normally that they are not interesting, spectacular, or even new.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., suddenly, a cow crossed the highway...; She told me that she was pregnant...; Mr. Robinson died yesterday...; I had lost my key...

created” (4:11). On the other hand, heaven still seems to be in balance until the Lamb is hailed as “worthy are thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth” (5:9). This balance is disturbed! The heavenly court begins to initiate and respond to earthly events. We must bear in mind, though, that all the events on the earth surely are planned to fulfill “Thy will.”

The result is that the heavenly as well as the earthly situation becomes unstable or unbalanced. The conflict on the earth grows: the degree or the extent of the plagues introduced by the blowing of a trumpet (8:2 - 9:21, 11:14-19) is more serious than that of the plagues that followed the opening of the seven seals” (5:1 - 6:17, 8:1). In the meanwhile, the passages that interrupt the narration - (A) 7:1-8 and (B) 7:9-17 appear to present the heavenly response to the question “who can stand before [the wrath of the Lamb]?” ((B’) 6:9-11) and the instruction of when “the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete” ((A’) 6:12-17) respectively.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the interruption of 10:1-11:13, the active heavenly reaction to “[the] prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (10:11) takes place in order to allow a last opportunity to repent and be saved, as the rest of mankind do not repent even after the sixth trumpet plague (9:21). The effort results in some people returning to God (11:13).

In conclusion, it is necessary to say that two points below support the view that the section from 5:1 to 11:19 corresponds to the stage of complication of the narrative plot:

Firstly, in chapter 5, John at first is frustrated when nobody comes forward to open the seals of scroll - “I (John) wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it” (5:4). But the sudden appearance of the Lamb to take the scroll and open its seals surprises and delights John and the heavenly beings (5:8-14). The unexpected

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<sup>12</sup> A great deal has been written about the identity of the 144,000 as well as the relationship between the two vision (7:1-8 and 7:9-17) (cf. Du Rand 1991:275-6, Fiorenza 1991:65-8, Johnson 1981:484-5, Mounce 1977:164,171, Charles 1920:201-2).



action by the Lamb starts to shake or disturb the present situation in heaven and on earth. That is, because of the Lamb's action of opening the seals, as far as their situation is concerned, their static actions change to dynamic actions, or their seemingly stable state to an unstable state.

Secondly, from chapter 6 to chapter 11, the complication is increasingly serious until a final action by the Lamb (attempting the re-establishment of the original (stable) situation), which takes place from chapter 12 to chapter 16, in the "resolution stage." The final boundary of Setting (chapter 4) and the starting boundary of Resolution (chapter 12) help to demarcate the extent of the Complication (chapters 5-11).

#### 4.5.2.2.4. Resolution (12:1 - 16:21)

Van Dijk (1980:114-5) has said that complications, in general, require the further category of Resolution:

Language users are interested in knowing what "happens next," what the result or outcome is, how a predicament is resolved, etc. A typical constraint in this case is the involvement of human (or human-like) participants and their *actions*. Thus, a resolution in general features a (re-)action of a person to a previous event or action. If the complicating event was undesired or counter to the goals of the participant(s), **we may expect that the resolution will mention those actions that attempt the reestablishment of the original situation or the creation of a new situation in which further normal functioning is possible:** how I coped with a problem, avoided an accident, resolved a predicament, etc.

At this point we are interested in the resolution of the problem, or the termination of the conflict going on in the complication stage of the narrative. While the complication category should contain narratable and unexpected events, the resolution category requires the participant's (re-)action to the preceding events. This idea can be applied to this section ranging from 12:1 to 16:21.

The appearance of the Lamb, as the initiator of the complication, to take the scroll and to open its seals (5:9) agitates the seemingly static or stable state of the heavenly court which is the result of the patient endurance of Jesus waiting for people to repent and turn to God until this moment, when he seeks to prevent the loss of anyone whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life (21:27; Jn18:9). The same is true of the earth where the unreal static or stable state is the result of the false peace in the seemingly mighty Roman Empire. Both heavenly and earthly settings turn into the clamorous or tumultuous conditions of two opposing camps when warfare is at hand.

### **No further repentance and the radical action of Jesus against the power of the Satan: Judgment and Vindication**

Jesus starts to harvest on the end day. At this stage, it seems that he no longer makes an effort to get people on the earth to repent. This lasts until the trumpets have been blown. Then only the harvest with the reaping of the earth which indicates "salvation" (14:14-15) and the gathering of the clusters of the vine of the earth which means "judgment" (14:17-20) remains.

Jesus' efforts to save those who repent continue to the last, but only up to the trumpet plagues. He aims not to lose even anyone who repents and turns to God, as we see in "this was to fulfill the word which he had spoken, 'of those whom thou gavest me I lost not one'" (Jn 18:9, cf. 17:2). Consequently, that they do not repent of their sin even at the trumpet plagues (9:21), but some seem to repent after the prophecy of two witnesses (11:13). After this, no repentance takes place with the plagues of the bowls; instead "they cursed God" (16:9,11,21). On the part of Jesus, there thus is no need to continue with conflict with evil powers, and there is no need for patience to await further repentance; instead all complication is to be settled or resolved without delay (10:6) by means of his response to the slain saints' call, "how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" (6:10).

### **Resolution as a complete large narrative unit of UL3**

We are applying “five narrative typical categories (setting; complication; resolution; evaluation; moral)” to the Apocalypse on the global level of narrative. But we have to recognize that even small episodes can also often consist of some of the five categories. The resolution section (12:1-16:21) seems to be a case in point. In other words, this section may be divided into two parts with at least three categories (setting, complication, resolution): firstly, a prophetic and symbolic backdrop that has been woven around this conflict since primordial times (12:1-14:20)<sup>13</sup> and, secondly, the actual resolution (15:1-16:21).

The parallel structure of two parts as a pair is important insofar as it underscores the demarcation of this section as a complete narrative unit on UL3.

(A and A': Setting centered on Jesus; B and B': Complication centered on Beast; C and C': Resolution centered on “the end day”)

A (12:1-17) Heavenly flashback (the birth of Jesus; the dragon is thrown down to the earth at myth level)

B (13:1-18) Beasts killing the saint, as a parody of Jesus on the great day<sup>14</sup>

C (14:1-20) Harvesting on the end day (symbolic action of salvation and judgment)

A' (15:1-16:1) Heavenly liturgy for pouring out the seven bowls

B' (16:2-16) Plague falling on the beast's worshipper (16:2) and the throne of the beast (16:10-12), but no repentance among men (16:9,11) and three foul spirits assembling the kings of the world for battle on the great day (16:12-16)

C' (16:17-21) Destruction of the great Babylon

**The big wave should be preceded by several small waves!**

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<sup>13</sup> However, this may refer to Jesus' death/victory on the cross rather than to a primordial account of the fall of Satan or an eschatological battle (12:10-11). On this issue, see 5.4.1.

<sup>14</sup> In this part, we find the dramatic parody of Satan and his servants. The parody of Satan parallels the judging action of the Lamb at the great day. The beast from the earth kills the faithful, as Jesus smite the nations with the sharp sword from his mouth (19:11-21).



“Climax is the moment in a play or story at which a crisis reaches its highest intensity and is resolved. The major climax may be preceded by several climaxes of lesser intensity” (Beckson and Ganz 1989:43). The same is true of the narrative of the Apocalypse. As illustrated below, several small waves with less powerful climaxes (such as opening seals and blowing trumpets, and symbolic action of harvesting at the great day) have occurred but their climaxes were just precursors for the final great moment. In the case of the opening of the seal, the harbinger of the great day, its peak (6:12-17) is followed merely by silence (8:1) which, however, still anticipates a happening. In the case of the trumpet blowing, the peak (9:13-21) leads only to the twenty-four elders’ praise and announcement of “it is the time for the dead to be judged and for the servants to be rewarded” (11:16-18), in response to loud voices in heaven saying: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever” (11:15). In the case of the symbolic action of harvesting on the end day, the great day is still awaited as the climax. It is not until “the pouring of bowls” on the end day that all kinds of complications are resolved.

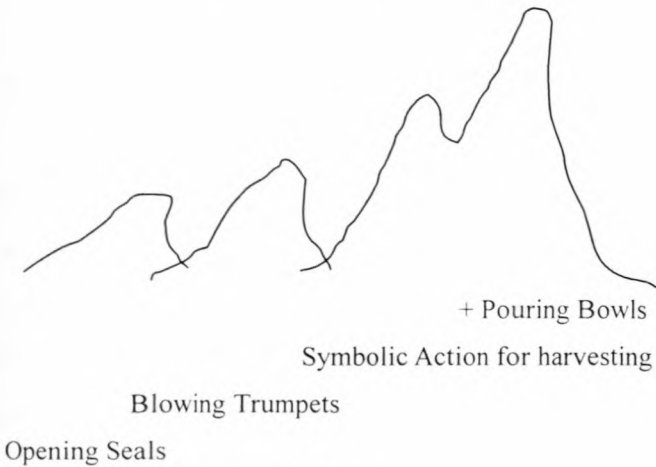


Fig. 8

But we have to remember that only the wrath of God is not his aim or goal on the end day, but rather the means by which he wants to complete his will: “the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (11:18) – the new Jerusalem for the faithful and the lake of fire for the Satan’s followers. In other words, the end day results in the judgment and the reward. Thus the next stage of narrative, “Evaluation,”

comprises the global mental or emotional reaction of the narrator and/or participant with respect to the narrated episode. The “mourning” and “delighting” of the narrator and/or participant in this section support the next section as an “Evaluation” stage of the narrative.

#### **4.5.2.2.5. Evaluation 17:1-22:5**

Van Dijk (1980:115) says of the evaluation:

We may expect that the central events and actions of a story be evaluated by the participant and/or narrator in the category of evaluation: e.g. God, I was so scared...; I was glad I was not there. **Evaluations feature the global mental or emotional reaction of the narrator participant with respect to the narrated episode: whether it was nice, awful, funny, etc.** Here the specific expressive function of stories appears most clearly, especially in natural narratives: they record not merely what happened to us but also what it did to us.

#### **The evaluation expressed by the mental or emotional reaction**

Complication (5:1-11:19) is finally settled in the resolution stage of the narrative, peaking with the fall of Babylon (16:17-21). But John would probably feel the necessity to show the evaluation of the central events and actions of a story via the participant and/or narrator. For this purpose, John skillfully deals with these aspects in full in the “Evaluation” stage of the narrative.

In the meanwhile, the evaluation stage often carries an “emotional overtone” expressed by the participants or the narrator. This is especially true of the evaluation of the Apocalypse (17:1-22:5), in that the whole of chapter 18 and almost half of chapter 19 (19:1-10) consist of global mental/emotional expressions of “the fall of Babylon” such as “mourning” or “exclamation” or “delighting” or “praising,” expressed by the various participants of the narrative, while the whole of 21:1 to 22:5 also states John’s radiant impressions of “the New Jerusalem.” In this way, John skillfully presents the central

events and actions of the narrative story to be evaluated.

### **Thematic order rather than chronological order**

Just after the seventh bowl is poured out as the resolution of God, its final outcome is shown at length. Firstly, John is transported, in the Spirit, into the wilderness (17:30) to see the outcome of the judgment against the harlot, and then, similarly, into a great high mountain (21:10) to see the outcome of the vindication of the bride. The sharp contrast between the visions of the harlot and the bride as units have been noted by many scholars.<sup>15</sup> The contrast between them serves to frame the literary unit, which is structured in chiastic form. this means that the sequence is developed thematically in inverse order, rather than chronologically.<sup>16</sup>

### **The chiastic structure**

We have to note that this evaluation section (17:1-22:5) seems to repeat the climax of the resolution stage which already occurred with the seventh bowl plague in detail. But this section is no longer part of the sequential framework, but is thematic and logical. The thematic development of this final outcome can be displayed roughly in the following chiastic frame:

A The fall of Babylon (17:1-19:21)

B The dragon sealed for a thousand years and "the first resurrection" (20:1-6)

B' The judgment of the dragon after the period and "the second death" (20:7-15)

A' The coming down of the holy city, Jerusalem (21:1 - 22:5)

The song of the 24 elders in 11:18 proclaims that the time has arrived "for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." As the climax of the heavenly response to that, the seventh of the bowl pouring plagues

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<sup>15</sup> See Smith (1994:387,392), Bauckham (1993:18-21), Snyder (1991:446-449), Giblin (1974:487-504).

<sup>16</sup> Chapters 17-22 has been an exegetical Gordian knot, especially in a chronologically sequential framework (e.g. Charles 1920, 2:144-54).



results in two outcomes concerning the dwelling places of the Satan's followers and the Lamb's followers: (A) the fall of Babylon (17:1-19:21) and (A') the establishment of the new Jerusalem (21:1-22:5). Additionally they accompany two outcomes concerning the judgment of the dead according to what they had done: (B) "the first resurrection": the faithful come to life again, and reign with Christ for a thousand years (20:1-6) and (B') "the second death": any one whose name is not found written in the book of life, is thrown into the lake of fire (20:7-15).

Additionally, to confirm that this section, as a complete unit at UL3, has a thematic chiastic arrangement, it would be helpful to consider other studies supporting this perspective in various ways. In connection with this perspective, it would be especially worthwhile to take into consideration the analyses of Snyder (1991) and Bauckham (1993), because Snyder proves the chiastic framework within this section, while Bauckham deals with the chiastic relationship between the preceding part (chaps 5-16) and this section (chaps 17-22).

#### Snyder's Suggestion (1991)

Taking seriously the finality of the series of the bowls, which is expressed in the announcement "it is done!" (16:17), Snyder believes that the pouring out of the seventh bowl represents the culmination of the wrath of God, and signals the completion of the judgment of the harlot city (16:17-20). After that John is shown the totality of the judgment of the great harlot in chapters 17 and 18. The same announcement is repeated in 21:6, but the second announcement seems to be different from 16:17, since it signals the restoration of the heavenly city (21:6-7). After that, John is shown the totality of the Bride in 21:1-22:5. It makes sense to be shown the final outcome of the judgment after the judgment is executed.

The chiastic framework reflects this, depicting the totality of judgment and vindication. In the meanwhile, Snyder's study serves to account for doublets, which have been problematic in a chronologically sequential reading of the book. He displays the thematic development of this final outcome in 17-22 in the following chiasm (:448):

- A Judgment of the harlot (17:1-19:10; cf., 21:8)
- B Divine judge (19:11-16)
- C Beast and false prophet judged (19:17-21)
- D Satan sealed for a thousand years (20:1-3)
  
- D' Saints reign for a thousand years (20:4-6)
- C' Gog and Magog judged (20:7-10)
- B' Divine Judge (20:11-15)
- A' Vindication of the Bride (21:1-22:5; cf., 19:7-9)

#### A-A'

He accounts for the antithetical parts (21:8 and 19:7-9) interrupted in both their main sections (17:1-19:10 and 21:1-22:5). It is because 21:8 expresses the theme of A (17:1-19:10), and similarly 19:7-9 that of A' (21:1-22:5). The mention of the marriage theme in 19:7-9 links A to A' on the literary level, while the linkage also occurs in the opposite direction in chapter 21, the reference to the unfaithful in 21:8 linking A' back to A. Theologically, this linkage emphasizes that salvation is the corresponding aspect of judgement.

#### B-B'

The vision of the rider on the white horse who judges in righteousness (B 19:11-16)<sup>17</sup> is seen to complement the vision of the great white throne and the last judgment (B' 20:11-15).

#### C-C'

The battle of the beasts against the Lamb and his army (19:17-21) and the battle of Gog and Magog against the holy city (20:7-10) form thematic pairs (C-C'), because the battles of 19:17-21 and 20:7-10 are doublets which recount from different perspectives

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<sup>17</sup> 19:15 informs us that the divine warrior-judge is the one who treaded the winepress of this wrath that the harlot was forced to drink (cf., 14:20)

the battle of Armageddon mentioned in connection with the sixth bowl (16:14-16).<sup>18</sup>

D-D'

The thousand year imprisonment of Satan and the thousand year reign of the saints with the Lamb make an antithetical pair D-D'.

Like this, he observes the correspondences of the chiastic framework of this section (17:1-22:5). Theologically, this structure emphasizes that salvation is the corresponding side of judgment. Thus, his chiastic structure shows the totality and finality of the divine judgment, the divine wrath against the harlot and the divine reward to the saints, and also proves that the "evaluation" section (17:1-22:5) can be regarded as a complete unit at UL3.

Bauckham's Suggestion (1993)

Centering around the judgment of the destroyers of the earth, to review their arrangement in the book also is helpful in identifying the chiastic framework of the evaluation section.

Here Bauckham's view (:18-21) is worth noting that the order in which the principal enemies of God and his people appear in the book and the order in which their destruction occurs are reversed, providing a chiastic arrangement in the book:

- (a) Death and Hades (6:8)
- (b) The dragon (12)
- (c) The beasts and the false prophet (13)

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<sup>18</sup> According to him (: 448-449), "Both the battle scene in Rev 19:17-21 and that in 20:7-9 are dependent upon Ezekiel 38-39. There are indications that Gog and Magog are alternate designations for the two beasts. First, the beast in Rev 13 and 19:19 is generally considered to be an empire. In Ezek 38:2, Magog is an empire, and this is the case in the Apocalypse, as well, since Gog and Magog are the nations at the four corners of the earth (20:8). While Gog and Magog are not mentioned in Rev 19, the use of material from Ezekiel 38-39 makes them implicit. In Rev 20:8, the explicit mention of Gog and Magog and their assault against the beloved city recall the assault by Gog and his host in Ezekiel 38."



(d) Babylon (16)<sup>19</sup>

(d') Babylon (17-18)

(c') The beasts and the false prophet (19:20)

(b') The dragon (20:1-10)

(a') Death and Hades (20:14)

(The anticipatory reference to the beast in 11:7 and Babylon in 14:8 can be discounted and Italics are mine.)

This chiastic frame also supports the fact that, differently from the events in the complication or resolution stage, the events in this section are presented thematically and logically, rather than sequential. In other words, the resolution stage often follows sequential order, while the evaluation stage often emphasizes thematic development through the mental/emotional expression of participants, or the narrator. This also helps to confirm that this section (17:1-22:5) belongs to the evaluation rather than the resolution category.

#### 4.5.2.2.6. Moral/Coda

Van Dijk (1980:115) says of the moral:

The general pragmatic function of narratives, finally, appears in the well-known category of *Coda* or *Moral*. **Such a moral draws a conclusion so to speak from the events for further actions, both of the hearer and of the speaker:** e.g. I'll never take him on a vacation again! Next time I'll stay home. Morals are, as we see, not only explicit in fables or parables but also occur normally in everyday stories, especially when they are told to inform somebody about the possible consequence of doing something.

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<sup>19</sup> Concerning (d) 16 and (d') 17-8, Bauckham (1993:20) argues that the reference to Babylon in 16:9 is just anticipatory and parallels (d) Babylon (17) and (d') Babylon (18). But I consider the fall of Babylon in 16:17-21 as the climax of the narrative which belongs to the resolution stage, while the fall of Babylon in chapters 17-18 belongs to the evaluation stage of the narrative.

What are the characteristics of the moral in 22:6-21?

This section definitely has characteristics of the Moral stage of the narrative, because desirable actions are requested from the audience and serious warnings are pronounced against undesirable actions.

The desirable actions are as follows: "Blessed is who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:7); "Worship God" (22:9); "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near" (22:10); "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (22:11); "Blessed are those who wash their robes" (22:14); "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'come.' And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price" (22:17).

Meanwhile, the warnings are expressed as follows: "I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them God will add to him the plagues described in this book" (22:18); "if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away this share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (22:19). What is seen as desirable and undesirable action for the audience occurs in half (8) of the total verses (16) of this section (22:6-21). This means that the moral aspect occurs in as much as 50 percent of the verses. Because of this, the fact that "the asking for future action or the warning against vice (or immorality)" deduced from all the global events is concentrated in this section indicates that this section definitely corresponds to the "Coda/Moral" part, the last narrative category.

In connection with this "moral" section, it would be helpful to find out what "a code of conduct" for participants in the narrative would have been, because desirable conduct in the narrative should continue to be required even after reading of the narrative. The codes of conduct linked to hierarchical status of participants (God > Jesus > the saints > the rest) are frequently suggested explicitly or implicitly from the beginning to the end

of the narrative. For example, God wants to *restore* his creature (“I make all things new” (21:5)), Jesus executes *judgment and salvation* for the sake of God’s will (“the time ... for rewarding thy servants... and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (12:18)), the saints should *witness* to God’s word and Jesus (1:9) (“You must again prophecy...” (10:11)), the rest of people including some Christians who have fallen away should *repent* of their sin and turn to God (“Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins...” (18:4)).

We may well detect such codes of conduct for each main character in the moral section. The code of conduct for God, “the water of life” in 22:17 and “the tree of life and in the holy city” in 22:19, etc. is implied in the completion of his aim – namely, the “*restoration*” of his creation into the original state. God wanted to restore the unstable (going wrong) world (dominated by the Satan, the instigator of instability, and his followers) to the stable world (where “the dwelling of God is with them [and] he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people” (21:3), “his servants shall worship him” (22:3) and “the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (22:2)). Now it is done! (17:17; 21:6). Now, it has been done on earth as it is in heaven. Starting from the unstable state at the “setting stage” of the narrative, the story finally shows the stable state of the “evaluation stage” after having passed through the “complication stage” and “resolution stage.” As a result, God’s actions can be said to restore the unstable state of the world to a stable state.

As for the code of conduct for Jesus Christ, “I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done” (22:12) implies his mission to complete God’s will. In other words, Jesus is sent to the earth to fulfill God’s intention of restoring all creation to the original state. Therefore Jesus’ actions on the earth and after his ascension into heaven are related to God’s goal. His main mission in completing God’s aim would be through the *salvation* of his followers and *judgment* of Satan and his followers.

The code of conduct for the saints, which is implied in “do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near” (22:10) and “I Jesus have sent my angel to



you with this testimony for the churches” (22:16) suggests that his angel or the saints should *witness (or show)* the churches “what must soon take place” (22:6). In other words, the mission of the saints, like John, is to live “their life of *witness*,” that is, to keep the word of God and to deliver the testimony of Jesus to the world.

Finally for the rest of people, expressions such as “those who wash their robes” (22:14) and “outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murders and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood” (22:15) urge them to *repent* and to turn to God. In other words, the straying Christian or the people of the world should *repent* of their evildoing and worship only God, instead of worshipping their idols.

Thus, the code of (particular) conduct for each participant who appears in the narrative can be described in a hierarchical way as shown below:

#### The Code of Conduct of Each Participant

God	Restoration
Jesus	Salvation and Judgment
The saints	Witness
The rest	Repentance

#### The parallel structure of two (introductory and concluding) parts

The verbal correspondence between the introductory part (1:1-20) and the concluding part (22:6-21) of the text is important insofar as it underscores the demarcation of this section as a complete narrative unit at UL3. If we draw the chiastic framework between two parts, according to the verbal similarity or equivalent:

- A 1:1-2 The **revelation** of Jesus Christ
- B 1:3 Those who **keep** what is written therein
- C 1:4-8 He is **coming**; all tribes of the earth will **wail** on account of him
- D 1:9-18 Epiphany: I **fell** at his feet as though dead
- E 1:19-20 **Write** what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.
- E' 22:6-7 **Show** what must soon take place
- D' 22:8-9 Epiphany: I **fell** down to worship at the feet of angel
- C' 22:10-16; 17 "I am **coming** soon"; Let him (that is, anyone) who hears say, "**come**."
- B' 22: 18 -19 **Warning against** those changing the words<sup>20</sup>
- A' 22:20-21 Jesus Christ who **testifies** to these things

A and A':

The word "revelation" in A is equal to the word "testify" in A' in the sense of "inform."

B and B':

The words "keep" and "not change" are interchangeable, because of their similar connotation.

C and C':

Not to "come" results in "wail," so come! In other words, it implies that one who hears should come to him. Otherwise, there will be wailing on account of Jesus.

D and D':

The verb "fell" is repeated in both epiphany.

E and E':

The verb "write" and "show" are equivalent in the implied meaning, because both aim to inform of something.

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<sup>20</sup>It means warning against those breaking the words instead of keeping them.

### 4.5.3. Narrative Unit Level Four (UL4)

#### **Division by means of entering into and leading out of the visionary world**

At UL4, the narrative is divided into Introduction (1:1-8), Body (1:9-22:5), and Ending (22:6-22:21), by means of the literary strategy leading into the visionary world (1:9) and leading out of visionary world (22:6). The story progresses from John standing on Patmos (a real-world event), to the visionary world experience. Then we are quickly taken back to earth again in the closing address to the reader. When the audience enters into and out of the visionary world, they would be changed.<sup>21</sup> Barr (1998), for example, uses a marvelous example of this power of myth<sup>22</sup> - "The Song of the Cuna Shaman" by Lévi-Strauss (1963:186-205) - to explain the "transforming effect" of the Apocalypse when the audience experiences the visionary world:

Like the shaman, John begins and ends by addressing his audience and tells of journeys to other worlds where battles are fought and victories won. One entering into the myth will be transformed. In fact it is the very performance of the story that releases its power. Its function is not to relay information or express the author's views so much as it is to create a new situation for those who hear it. [The audience is changed by the experience of the story] ([ ] mine).

#### **Division according to epistolary form**

On the literary level, the use of the epistolary form serves to separate the visionary material (as a body) from the introduction of the book and the conclusion (as an ending).

The epistolary introduction includes the identification of the sender (John) and the addressees (the seven churches in Asia, 1:4), the greeting ("grace to you and peace from

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<sup>21</sup> Many scholars have dealt with the transforming power of the Apocalypse. Among them, Barr (1998:175-180; 1984:39-50), Fiorenza (1991:117-139), Gager (1975:49-57) are representative.

<sup>22</sup> According to Barr (2000), "myths are special kinds of stories, often telling what happened "in the beginning." Hearing the myth one enters again into that ideal time and so adjusts one's life to the world as it is meant to be."



him..." (1:4b-5a)), and a doxology for the opening thanksgiving/blessing with an eschatological climax (1:5b-8). The apocalyptic visions (1:9-22:5) are presented in the framework of a letter. The body is followed by a paraenetic section (22:6-20), and the closing benediction (22:21). The paraenetic section, with frequent admonitions to the readers (22:6-20), is distinct from the apocalyptic body of the letter (1:9-22:5), and it literarily forms the conclusion to the work, which begins at 22:6. The final verse is a benediction that is similar to others that conclude the normal New Testament epistolary form (22:21; cf., 2 Thess 3:18). In light of this, the epistolary form seems to be integral to the entire Apocalypse, and functions as more than simply a literary framing device.

4.6. Syntactic Structures of the Apocalypse

We shall illustrate the outline of the Apocalypse, based on the discussion until now. Before going further, however, we need to clarify the terminology used for categories of the structures in order to avoid confusion. To this end, the structures to be discussed in this study are named according to the categories of structure used in Patte' table (1990b:78, 223) as follows:

The Semio-Narrative Structure Categories of Patte

Syntactic Components	Semantic Components
(1) Narrative-Syntactic (namely, Surface-level) Structure	(3) Narrative-Semantic Structure
(2) Fundamental-syntactic (namely, Deep-level) Structure	(4) Fundamental-Semantaic Structure

Now, we can divide the syntactic structure into (1) a *narrative-syntactical (surface-level) structure* and (2) a *fundamental-syntactical (deep-level) structure*, while the semantic structure can be divided into (3) a *narrative-semantic structure* and (4) a *fundamental-semantic structure*.

Therefore, broadly speaking, the outlines of the text below (chapter 4.6.1.) may correspond to (1) the *narrative-syntactic (or surface-level) structure*, while the actantial structure of the Apocalypse we discuss in this section (chapter 4.6.2.) may correspond to (2) the *fundamental-syntactic (or deep-level) structure*. On the other hand, the concentric (theme-centered) structure of the text to be dealt with in chapter 5.1. corresponds to (3) the *narrative-semantic structure*, and the macrostructure to be dealt with in chapter 5.4. corresponds to (4) the *fundamental semantic structure*.

#### **4.6.1. Narrative-Syntactic Structure of the Apocalypse**

##### **:The Superstructure of the book**

##### **UL5 The Whole Text as a Narrative (1:1-22:11)**

##### **UL4 Introduction (1:1-8)**

##### ***UL3 Introduction to the story (1:1-8)***

##### ***UL3 (1) Prologue (1:1-3)***

- a. Title (1:1a)
- b. The witness (1:1b-2)
- c. Those who keep the prophecy (1:3)

##### ***UL3(2) Epistolary prescript (1:4-8)***

- d. The communicators as the main characters (1:4-8)

##### **UL4 Body (1:9-22:5)**

##### ***UL3 Setting of the story (1:9-4:11)***

UL1 Epiphany (1:9-20): Leading into the visions (“in the Spirit” (1:10))

##### **UL2 The earthly setting: Messages to the churches (2:1-3:22)**

- UL1 (1) To the church in Ephesus (2:1-7)
- UL1 (2) To the church in Smyrna (2:8-11)
- UL1 (3) To the church in Pergamum (2:12-17)
- UL1 (4) To the church in Thyatira (2:18-29)
- UL1 (5) To the church in Sardis (3:1-6)
- UL1 (6) To the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- UL1 (7) To the church in Laodicea (3:14-22)

##### **UL2 The heavenly setting: God ruling all the events (4:1-11)**

UL1 The Vision of the Throne & the heavenly beings (4:1-11)  
(Transported into Heavenly court “in the Spirit” (4:2))

##### ***UL3 Complication: Opening the Scroll (5:1-11:19)***

##### **UL2 Seven seals (5:1-6:17; 8:1)**

- UL1 Heavenly liturgy for opening seven seals (5:1-14)
- UL1 The 1st seal: Conquest (6:1-2)
- UL1 The 2nd seal: Take peace from the earth (6:3-4)
- UL1 The 3rd seal: A bad harvest (6:5-6)
- UL1 The 4th seal: A fourth of the earth killed (6:7-8)
- UL1 The 5th seal: Cry of the Martyrs (6:9-11)
- UL1 The 6th seal: The great day (6:12-17)

##### **UL2 Interruption (7:1-17)**

- Sealing of the 144,000 and identifying a great multitude in white robes (as answer to the 6th seal “the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before God” (6:17))
- UL1 Sealing the servants of God (7:1-8)
- UL1 Praising God and the Lamb in Heaven (7:9-17)



**UL2 Seven seals continued**

UL1 The 7th seal: Silence in heaven (8:1)

**UL2 Seven trumpets (8:2 – 9:21; 11:14-19)**

UL1 Heavenly liturgy for seven trumpets (8:2-6)

UL1 The 1st trumpet: A third of earth burned up (8:7)

UL1 The 2nd trumpet: A third of the sea harmed (8:8-9)

UL1 The 3rd trumpet: A third of the waters turned bitter  
(8:10-11)

UL1 The 4th trumpet: A third of the heavenly bodies turned  
dark (8:12)

UL1 The 5th trumpet: Locusts from the Abyss (8:13 - 9:12a)

UL1 The 6th trumpet: massacre of mankind “a third of  
mankind” and no repentance by the rest of mankind  
(9:12b-21)

**UL2 Interruption of trumpet plagues : Last chance for prophecy  
and repentance (10:1-11:13)**

UL1 “No more delay” and John again to prophesy (10:1-11)

UL1 The nations to trample over the holy city for forty-two  
months, and two witnesses to prophesy for the same period  
(11:1-13)

**UL2 Seven trumpets continued (8:2-11:19)**

UL1 The 7th trumpet (11:14-19)

***UL3 Resolution - Bringing the complication to a settlement:  
The origin of the conflict, the redeemed from the conflict  
and the wrath of God (12:1- 16:21)***

***UL3 (1) A mystic backdrop around the conflict and the prophetic  
expectation (12:1-14:20)***

**UL2 An introduction to the resolution: The origin of the  
conflict between the church and the evil beings (12:1-17)**

UL1 The birth of Jesus (12:1-6)

UL1 The death of Jesus on the cross (12:7-12)

UL1 The church era (12:13-17)

**UL2 Beasts making war on the faithful at the end of time to kill  
the saints, as a parody of Jesus “on the great day” (13:1-18)**

UL1 A beast from the sea (13:1-10)

UL1 Another beast from the earth (13:11-18)

**UL2 Harvesting at the end day (14:1-20)**

UL1 the Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)

UL1 Eternal gospel (14:6-13)

UL1 Symbolic action concerning harvesting at the  
end of time (14:14-20)

***UL3(2) The Actual resolving action (15:1-16:21)***

**UL2 Seven bowls as the last wrath of God (15:1-16:21)**

UL1 Heavenly liturgy for the seven bowls (15:1-16:1):  
Inauguration (15:1); Praising & Conferment (15:2-8)  
; Commending (16:1)

- UL1 The 1st bowl: Foul and evil sores (16:2)
- UL1 The 2nd bowl: The sea turned into blood (16:3)
- UL1 The 3rd bowl (16:4-7)
- UL1 The 4th bowl (16:8-9)
- UL1 The 5th bowl (16:10-11)
- UL1 The 6th bowl (16:12-16)
- UL1 The 7th bowl (The completion of God's wrath) (16:17-21)

***UL3 Evaluation: The full report and its confirmation of God's salvation and judgment (17:1-22:5)***

**UL2 The fall of Babylon (17:1-19:21)**

- UL1 The judgment of the great harlot (17:1-18)  
(Transported into Jesus' judgment vision "he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness" (17:3))
- UL1 Announcement of "the fall of Babylon" (18:1-24)
- UL1 Announcement of God's salvation and judgment (19:1-10)
- UL1 A rider on a white horse and his armies' campaign (19:11-16) and victory over their enemies (19:11-21)

**UL2 The victory over the dragon and "the 1st resurrection" (20:1-6)**

- UL1 Satan sealed for a thousand years (20:1-3)
- UL1 Saints' reign for a thousand years and "The first resurrection" (20:4-6)

**UL2 The judgment over the dragon and "the second death" (20:7-15)**

- UL1 The final judgment of the dragon after the millennium (20:7-10)
- UL1 The final judgment of those whose names were not found written in the book of life and "The second death" (20:11-15)

**UL2 Paradise Regained: The holy city, Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)**

- UL1 Introduction of the holy city (21:1-8)
- UL1 The outside features of the holy city Jerusalem (21:9-27)  
(Transported - "in the Spirit he carried me away into a great, high mountain" (21:10))
- UL1 The inside features of the holy city, Jerusalem (22:1-5)

**UL4 Ending (22:6-21)**

***UL3 Coda/Moral***

incl. Epiphany: Leading out of the vision (22:8-9)

***UL3 (1) Epilogue with moral (22:6-17)***

d. The communicators (22:6-17)

***UL3 (2) Epistolary postscript with moral (22:18-21)***

- c. Those to change the prophecy (22:18-19)
- b. He who testifies (22:20)
- a. Colophon: blessing to addressee (22:21)

#### **4.6.2. The Fundamental-Syntactic Structure of the Apocalypse**

We shall, now, briefly, try to derive the fundamental-syntactic (namely, deep-level) structure of the Apocalypse, based on the results of the narrative-syntactic (namely, surface-level) structure, by means of structuralist narrative criticism. Here my aim is to present, graphically, the deep-level structure by using structuralist analyses of the whole Apocalypse. For this purpose, the opinions of several narratologists would be helpful in understanding the structuralist idea and approach.<sup>1</sup>

##### ***4.6.2.1. The Basic Ideas of Structuralism***

First, the emphasis on relationships forms the basis of all structural thinking. According to Stibbe (1994:33), the general structural analysis of narrative arose from Saussure's linguistic work in the early twentieth Century. In particular, Saussure saw the world made up of relationships rather than things. Supporting this new perception, Hawkes (1977:18) says that "the full significance of any entity or experience cannot be perceived unless and until it is integrated into the structure of which it forms a part."

Second, the universality of narrative has an almost infinite diversity of forms. Barthes (1977:79) argues that "the narratives of the world are numberless," they are spoken or written by an "almost infinite diversity of forms" such as myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy. "Nowhere is there nor has there been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives"; "narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural; it is simply there, like life itself."

Lastly, the permanent structure (or the fundamental narrative grammar) is behind narratives. Jameson (1972:109) defines structuralism as "an explicit search for the permanent structures of the mind itself, the organizational categories and forms through which the mind is able to experience the world." Barthes (1977) also argues for the universality of the permanent structures behind narratives. He sees a fundamental



narrative grammar underlying all narratives. In his opinion, a narrative is simply, “a long sentence.” It must, therefore, obey certain rules, as do sentences (:84). Behind and within the great variety of narratives in the world, there is “an atemporal logic lying behind the temporality of narrative” (:98).

#### **4.6.2.2. The Three Models and Their Weak Points**

Saussure attempted to discover and describe the permanent, deep structures of language. Subsequently narrative theorists applied Saussure’s theory of language to narratives. They basically diverged into three directions using a functional model, a binary model, and an actantial model (Stibbe 1994:34).

##### **4.6.2.2.1. The Functional Model**

The Russian folklorist Propp ([1928] 1978), as a first proposer for functional analysis, tried to find the overarching scheme that embraces all Russian fairy-tales. When he closely inspected 100 such tales, Propp found that there were “significant interchangeable variables” (:60) in them. He thought that he had found a deep structure (or grammar) of possible relationships made by a limited number of possible actions of the characters of the stories, which all fairy-tales can obey. He called the limited (unchangeable) actions “functions,” and concluded that all Russian fairy-tales are structured by some of thirty-one possible functions which involved seven types of characters.

##### **4.6.2.2.2. The Binary Model**

Lévi-Strauss (1963) studied myths using Saussure’s linguistic system and found that “the rules which govern myths emerge from identical unconscious structures.” He thought that the unconscious structure behind myth is revealed in the mediation of binary opposites and the myth has the tendency to resolve such oppositions. He called the permanent structure behind myths the *langue*. He believed that all myths obey the

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<sup>1</sup> The history behind the development of structuralism has been well explained by Stibbe (1994:30-49).

rules of this transcendental, universal grammar, the permanent structures, which are manifested in the resolution of things existing in binary opposition (1969:230).<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.6.2.2.3. The Actantial Model

The *actantial* approach, proposed by Greimas (1966), is characteristic of a more transindividual type than Propp's. This is because Propp's approach is about one particular narrative genre (the Russian folk-tale), while Greimas' actantial model refers to "*the permanent structure behind all narratives*" (Stibbe 1994:35). His actantial model consists of six different character poles of narrative (subject, object, sender, receiver, helper and opponent) and three functional axes (communication, power and volition).

Structural approaches to biblical narrative are necessary in order to identify the story-structures which John had in mind as he composed the Apocalypse. In other words, it is structural analysis that is able to discover and describe the transcendental, permanent structures, the deep structure. While Barthes (1977), the first to use the functional and actantial approaches in biblical studies, applied them to Genesis 32:22-32, Leach (1969), one of the first to apply the binary approach to biblical narrative, applied it to Genesis as Myth. As for the Apocalypse, Fiorenza (1977), as far as I know, is the first person to apply the actantial model to this text, while scholars like Collins (1976), Gager (1975) and Barr (2000) use the concept of the binary structure of myth in unfolding their ideas. None of the latter three researchers employ a full-scale systematic approach to the binary structure, however.

Here I, parallel to Fiorenza's application of structural model, use Greimas' actantial model to present graphically the deep structure on which the presupposed macronarrative (or macrostructure) is founded. Actually the structural analysis of narrative will most commonly be able to follow either Lévi-Strauss' concentration upon

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<sup>2</sup> *langue* signifies the grammar of language, while *Parole* is the individual, concrete speech-utterance which obeys that grammar. "*Langue* is to *parole* what the rules of chess are to an individual move" (Hawkes 1977:20).

*deep mental structures*, or Propp’s and Greimas’ concentration upon *deep plot structures*. The scholar’s choice in the above matter primarily depends upon the concern of plot, according to Mcknight (1978:256-66)’s opinion that Propp’s and Greimas’ structural analysis is interested in plot whilst Lévi-Strauss’ structural analysis is interested in structures unrelated to plot. This study is so plot-centered that I choose to use the actantial model to identify the deep, transcendental structure of the Apocalypse.

### 4.6.2.3. The Application of the Actantial Model to the Apocalypse

Before I apply the actantial model to the Apocalypse, we can first summarize *the codes of conduct/action of the main characters*<sup>3</sup> as follows :

God who intends to restore all creation into a new creation, sends Jesus to complete it through his salvation and judgment action; Jesus is killed by the Romans, but this event becomes his victory. Now he sits on the throne in heaven and rules over the world with the rod of iron and is coming to complete the salvation and judgment. When he comes, all creation will be restored to a stable condition in which everything is under the control of God. All these things become the eternal gospel to the faithful, who should witness unto their death in order that the evil-doers or the wayward Christians may return to God and worship only God, turning from Satan.

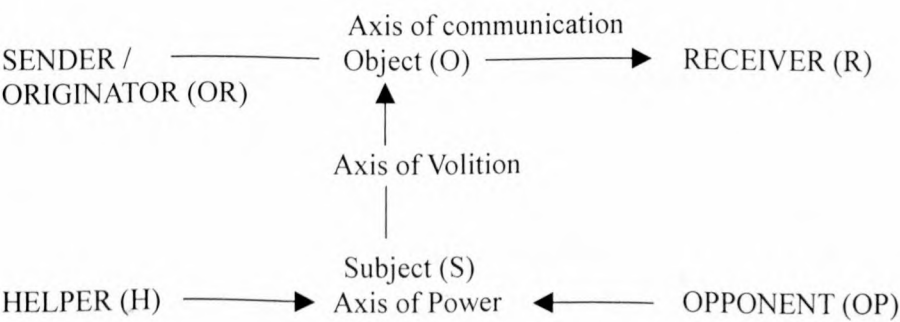


Fig. 9

<sup>3</sup> The codes of conduct of the main characters is dealt with at the end of the semantic structure (chapter 5) to be discussed later (see chap 5.5.3.3; cf. 4.5.2.2.6.). They can be referred to here, in that the syntactic structure and the semantic structure should be interdependent.



Now let me apply Greimas’ actantial model to the above summary:

A story is usually begun when an originator tells a receiver to undertake some task (Stibbe 1994:36). At the beginning of the Apocalypse, the divinity calls upon the receiver to read, hear and keep the words of the prophecy through the beatitude of 1:3. Thus the axis of communication is done by this indirect telling. After that, God (as originator) for the purpose of the new creation (as object), sends Jesus (as subject) with the mission to judge and save the world (as receiver). The volitional axis represents this quest. Jesus is opposed by the anti-divine powers (as opponent) but defeats them on the cross and continues to do so by means of the witnessing activity of the Spirit and the saints (as helpers).<sup>4</sup> The power axis represents the struggle involved in its execution. On the power axis are Jesus’ saving and judging actions and at one polar of this axis are helpers who witness to the word of God and at the other polar opponents who seduce people into sins or kill them. The Apocalypse as a whole can be projected onto the model in the following way:

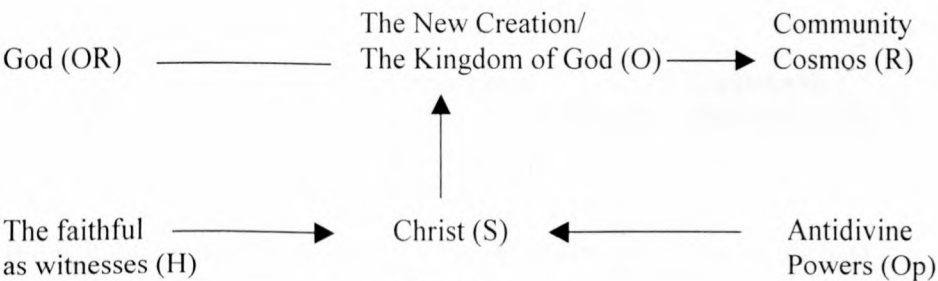


Fig. 10

Each plot phase can be said to repeat this actantial scheme of the Apocalypse as a whole: fig. 10.

However, this model is a little different from Fiorenza’s with regard to “Object.” The “Object” in this study is the new creation (the kingdom of God) and during Jesus’ salvation and judgment, he has his opponents and helpers on the polar of the power axis. In the meanwhile, the “Object” of Fiorenza’s model is the judgment and salvation but in

<sup>4</sup> In relation to the selection of actants, Fiorenza (1985:174) points out that “actants should not be confused with the actors of the manifestations but that they are structural elements which have been obtained by reducing an infinite set of variables (the various personages and actions of the narrative) to a limited number of structural elements (actantial roles or spheres of action).”

my opinion, it is possible that she may fail to distinguish “God as an initiator” standing behind all events and “Jesus as an executor” fulfilling God’s will.

There is another problem in regard to the structural center of the Apocalypse which tends to lead many exegetes astray. An example of this is that Fiorenza regards the section 10:1-15:4 as the climactic center of the dramatic action (1985:177) or the center of the structure of the Apocalypse (1985:175). In contrast to the rest of the Apocalypse, she produces for the part (10:1-15:4) a different actantial model in which Satan/Dragon becomes the subject (1985:175) as is shown in fig. 11. Here her insight should be respected, but her finding should be reconsidered, because it disregards the fact that there are various narrative levels in one narrative.

In fact, the section 10:1-15:4 doesn’t represent only the worldly (anti-divine) events; it also includes the heavenly (divine) events.<sup>5</sup> God stands behind the events of the story as the sender or originator of this quest.

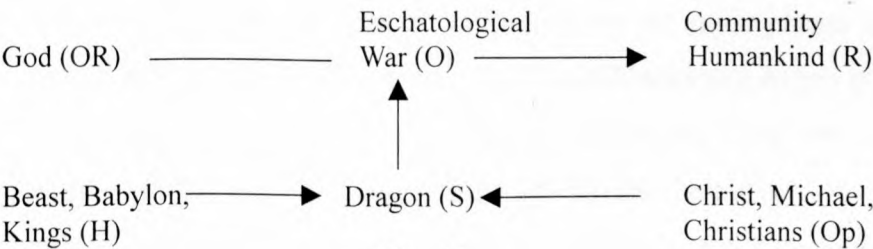


Fig. 11

Thus the deep structure for the whole narrative (including this part (10:1-15:4)) can be expressed by one actantial model, in so far as all the lower narrative levels (1, 1/2, 2 and 3) always imply the comprehensive presupposed macronarrative (narrative level 0).<sup>6</sup> If 10:1-15:4 as an independent story could be separated from the whole story, Fiorenza’s actantial model (fig.11) may work well. It should be a scheme only for the worldly (anti-divine) story. Thus, Fiorenza’s suggestion seems not to be valid any longer for the

<sup>5</sup> 10:1-11:13 (last chance for prophecy and repentance); 11:14-19 (the 7th trumpet: the pronouncement of the kingdom of God and the time for the dead to be judged in heaven); 12:1-17 (the birth, death and ascension of Jesus); 14:1-20 (visionary events for harvesting at the last day); 15:1-8,16:1(heavenly liturgy for bowl series) may belong to the divine events.

<sup>6</sup> See chap 5.3.

whole narrative; but we should be mindful of Stibbe's comment that "the actantial model works very well in the context of smaller and simpler narrative units" (1994:45).

In summary, for the whole story of the Apocalypse, the adequate actantial model should be fig. 10 in which God is an originator. "It is very easy to be subjective when moving from the narrative under scrutiny to the proposed generic structure of which it forms a part" (Stibbe 1994:43). Despite that, structuralism is capable of providing insights about the deep structure of the biblical narrative which no other method can supply. The actantial model analysis for the Apocalypse as a whole supports the presupposed macrostructure (5.5) and vice versa.

Each plot phase can be said to repeat this actantial scheme of the Apocalypse as a whole. As far as the Apocalypse is concerned, Jesus is the proponent who is on a quest, one of the commonest of all the New Testament narrative plots. God stands behind the events of the story as the sender or originator of this quest (for the new creation). Satan and his followers are his opponents, since they killed him to prevent him from accomplishing his mission (of judgment and salvation). However, he is placed on the throne to rule over the world with the rod of iron, and his followers and angels play the role of helper in the actantial scheme, by continuing his mission by their witness. The transcendent grammar (or the deep structure) of the apocalyptic narrative is revealed through all the dynamic relationships between these six actants (originator, object, receiver, helper subject, opponent) which work on the three functional axes (communication, power and volition).

#### **4.7. Summary**

The partial narrative units (see 4.4.3. delimitation chart) are firstly grouped into the basic narrative units (BNU, namely UL1), based on the criteria for identifying narrative units (see 4.3.2.). The narrative units at the narrative unit level 2 (UL2) are grouped under "the same theme" or "the same event" which are the main integrating principles. Then at the following, higher level (UL3), we try apply the narrative categories of Van Dijk (1991) to the global level of the narrative. The unity of the whole narrative is



revealed by proving the global interrelationship of the units at the previous level (UL3) all the way through the book. Then, at a still higher level (UL4), the narrative is divided into *Introduction, Body, and Ending*, by means of the literary strategy leading into visionary world and leading out of visionary world. Finally, at the highest level (UL5), the whole narrative must be regarded as a coherent unity. Additionally, it should be noted that, at each higher level, the units are sometimes represented through “chiasm” which is used to show a thematic unity in each unit. We then utilize the results to establish a narrative-syntactic (surface-level) structure (chapter 4.6.1) and a fundamental-syntactic structure of John’s narrative (4.6.2.)

The plot (in the narrative-syntactic structure) of the Apocalypse shows the movement from an unstable state to a stable condition, which refers to the establishment of God’s sovereignty on earth - “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In the meantime, the fundamental-syntactic (namely, deep-level) structure, established on the power axis and the volitional axis of Greimas’ actantial model, shows that *God* (the originator) for the purpose of *the new creation* (the object), sends *Jesus* (the subject) with the mission to *judge and save* the world (the receiver), while Jesus is opposed by the anti-divine powers (the opponent) but defeats them on the cross and continues to do so by means of the witnessing activity of the Spirit and the saints (the helpers). John’s narrative, as a result, represents this quest of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, epitomized by the New Jerusalem.

But it is too early to say what the theme of the whole Apocalypse is, because each unit has its own theme. The macrostructure to be dealt with in chapter 5.4. corresponds to the *fundamental semantic structure*, and the concentric (theme-centered) structure of the text to be dealt with in the chapter 5.1. corresponds to the *narrative-semantic structure*. The concentric structure and the macrostructure will both reveal the narrative theology of the Apocalypse, being built on the narrative plot,<sup>7</sup> a part of narrative-syntactic structure.

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<sup>7</sup> The plot is a flow for achieving an rhetorical effect to persuade the hearers/readers but should not be used to identify a historical sequence at all.

## Chapter Five: Narrative Theology of the Apocalypse

### 5.1. General

This chapter aims to identify the semantic structures (the concentric structure, macronarrative, and the macrostructure). If chapter four is related to a schematic structure of the narrative, this chapter can be said to correspond to a semantic structure, which is more closely related to the theology (content) of John's narrative than the former<sup>1</sup> (see 3.1.2.2.).

Firstly, *the concentric structure*, as a narrative-semantic structure, is superposed on the plot (the narrative-syntactic structure) of the Apocalypse. Unlike the forward-moving plot, the sequence of the concentric structure is developed *thematically in inverse order* and the narrative-semantic structure reflects a thematic correspondence between the corresponding sections.

Secondly, the theology of the Apocalypse will be dealt with, assuming that the Apocalypse has *five narrative levels*: John's experience, the transitional zone, visionary-world story, embedded story, and macronarrative (cf. Du Rand 1997:59-75; Boring 1992:704).

Thirdly, concerning *macronarrative*, which is not plotted in the narrative, this can be said to correspond to the theology (content) of the Apocalypse (cf. Boring 1992:704). However, this macronarrative (God's story) can be expounded with a link to the timeframe (cf. Du Rand 1997:63-65, Boring 1992:713-8).

Finally, a *macrostructure*, as a *fundamental semantic structure*, is often designated as *theme*, *topic*, *gist*, *upshot* or *point* to characterize the narrative as a whole (Van Dijk 1980:27). It deals, thus, with the central theme of the theology, which can be classified into *Theology*, *Christology* and *Pneumatology* because each of them has a different

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<sup>1</sup> Here superstructure also can be said to be (not directly but) indirectly related to the content, because a narrative schema is not the global content of a story but helps to organize the content.

code of conduct in this narrative.<sup>2</sup>

**The Terminological Difference between Macronarrative and Macrostructure**

Additionally, in order to avoid confusion, we need to pinpoint the terminological difference between macronarrative and macrostructure:

The macronarrative is not plotted in the book but is the comprehensive narrative (God’s Story)<sup>3</sup> which each of the lower narrative levels presupposes and implies. In connection with macronarrative, the various viewpoints help us to understand John’s theology better by allowing us to see what viewpoint he wants the hearers/readers to take. In particular, the ideological viewpoints may indicate “the norms and general worldview through which the characters and actions are evaluated” (Barr 1998:34).

On the other hand, the “macrostructures,” according to Van Dijk (1980:27), comprise higher-level or global meaning derived from lower-level meanings by way of their deletion, generalization or construction, which may imply or make new meaning.<sup>4</sup> Having an essential semantic function, this is often designated as *theme*, *topic*, *gist*, *upshot* or *point* to characterize the narrative as a whole.

As a result, although *macronarrative* and *macrostructure* each have their own different starting point and concern, they would be interchangeable insofar as they are all concerned with the theological content of the Apocalypse. Nevertheless, if the *macrostructure* may be said to be more **theme-centered**, the macronarrative would be more **story-centered**, so that in this study, the latter term will be used for expounding *God’s Story with a link to the timeframe* and the former one will be borrowed for

<sup>2</sup> That is, God is the initiator of/behind all the events, while Jesus, as God’s helper, executes his intention, and through the Spirit this revelation of God in Christ comes to us.

<sup>3</sup> According to Du Rand (1997:61), the macronarrative in the Apocalypse can be represented by “the theological story or God’s story.”

<sup>4</sup> Additionally, see Van Dijk (1980:13-15; 46-49) for the various functions macrostructures are supposed to have in complex semantic information processing. Here he summarizes as follows: “the notion of macrostructure appears to play a role in the description and explanation of many phenomena of discourse and interaction, such as coherence, thematization, relevance assignment, and global planning and interpretation” (:15).



dealing with *the cardinal theme of the theology of John's narrative*.

## 5.2. Concentric Structure superposing on the Forward-moving Plot

<b>A. 1:1-8:</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
(a) 1:1-3	Prologue: "Blessed is who reads ...for the time is near" (1:3)
(b) 1:4-8	Epistolary Prescript: "Behold he is coming..." (1:8)
<b>B. 1:9-4:11:</b>	<b>Setting</b>
(c) 1:9 – 3:22	The Earthly Setting
(d) 4:1-11	The Heavenly Setting
<b>C. 5:1 - 11:19:</b>	<b>Complication</b>
(e) 5:1 - 8:1	Seven Seals (5:1-6:17; 8:1) opened by Jesus & Interruption (7:1-17)
(f) 8:2 – 11:19	Seven Trumpets (8:2 – 9:21; 11:14-19) blown by seven angels & Interruption (4:1 – 11:13)
<b>C'. 12:1 – 16:21:</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
(e)' 12:1- 14:20	The Birth, Death, and Ascension of Jesus
(f)' 15:1 – 16:21	Seven Bowls poured by seven angels
<b>B'. 17:1-22:5:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
(c)' 17:1 – 19:21	The Fall of Babylon
(d)'' 20:1-6	The 2nd Resurrection
(c)'' 20:7-15	The 2nd Death
(d)' 21:1 – 22:5	The Establishment of the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Bride
<b>A'. 22:6-21:</b>	<b>Coda/Moral</b>
(a)' 22:6-17	Epilogue with Moral: "Blessed is he who keeps the words..." (22:7)
(b)' 22:18-21	Epistolary Postscript: "Surely I am coming soon" (22:20)

Modern readers are trained in linear-logical thinking, whereas the forward movement of John's narrative does not seem to follow a linear-temporal development.<sup>5</sup> But insofar as the promises of the seven messages recur without exception in the last section of the

<sup>5</sup> For example, interludes, apparent repetitions, hymns and the repeated announcement that the end is here confuse us.

book, the narrative's forward movement progresses from promise to fulfillment (Fiorenza 1991:34-37).

On the other hand, John's semantic structure can be expressed by a concentric architectural pattern. The concentric pattern means that "the sequence is developed *thematically in inverse order*, rather than chronologically," and the concentric structure reflects "*a thematic correspondence between the corresponding sections*" (Snyder 1991:449).

In this study, the combined structure of its forward-moving plot (see 4.5.3.2.) and its theme-oriented concentricism (see 2.1.3.2.4) can be shown as above.

### 5.3. The Narrative Levels of the Apocalypse

What is narrative theology? Facker (1983:343) defines narrative theology as follows:

[It, in its broad sense,] is discourse about God in the setting of story. Narrative (in its narrow sense) becomes the decisive image for understanding and interpreting faith. Depiction of reality, ultimate and penultimate, in terms of plot, coherence, movement, and climax is at the center of all forms of this kind of talk about God ([ ] is mine).

And how can we establish it? For this purpose, the analyses of the various levels of narrativity in the Apocalypse elaborated by Boring (1992) and Du Rand (1997) can be applied to identify the macronarrative (God's Story).

In addition, the various viewpoints help the hearers/readers to understand John's theology by allowing them to see what viewpoint he wants them to take. In this study, I will primarily follow the five points of view<sup>6</sup> suggested by Uspensky (1973) and applied to the Apocalypse by Resseguie (1998:32-48). These various points of view direct towards the *ideological point of view* which underlies the narrative and reflects

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<sup>6</sup>These are: phraseological point of view, spatial point of view, psychological point of view, temporal point of view, ideological point of view.

the author's values, norms, attitudes and general worldview; in other words, refers to the beliefs and values that shape the work (:33).

The theme of the theology (the macrostructure) of John's narrative can be indicated by both the theological macronarrative and the various points of view referring to the beliefs and values that shape the work. But an analysis of the ideological point of view "relies, to a degree, on intuitive understanding" (Uspensky 1973:8), since this ideological stance is rarely found on the surface of the narrative and is embedded beneath the other surface planes (phraseological, spacial, psychological, temporal) on which point of view is expressed.

### 5.3.1. The Five Narrative Levels in the Apocalypse

This section will cover the plot (introduction, setting, complication, resolution, evaluation and coda/moral), the level of narrativity (0,1,1/2,2,3), and the various points of view, all of which will serve to reveal the core/theme of the theology of John's narrative to be dealt with in the next section (5.5.).

As Boring (1992:703) points out, "a vision may have more than one narrative level. Narratives may be embedded in other narratives; like a play within a play." Certainly, different levels of narrativity may be found in the Apocalypse. But the number of levels would be subject to each critic's purpose. Boring first distinguishes three levels of narrativity according to generic features in the Apocalypse which can be thought of as vision, apocalypse, and letter (:703-5): Narrative level 1 is based on the narrative framework of the *letter* (John's /the churches' story); Narrative level 2 is represented by the *visions* of heavenly beings in the heavenly throne room (Christ's/ God's Story); and Narrative level 3 is categorized by three septet series (namely, the *visions* of seal, trumpet and bowl) that unfold from the heavenly actions (The World's Story). But he adds the macronarrative (God's Story), as the fourth level of narrativity, that is not plotted in the book but is the comprehensive narrative which each of three narrative levels presupposes and implies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Du Rand (1997:60) combines Boring's level two ("Christ's/God's story") and level three ("the world's story") into one ("the divine and cosmic story") in seeking the theological motif of the Apocalypse. That



NL0    Macronarrative

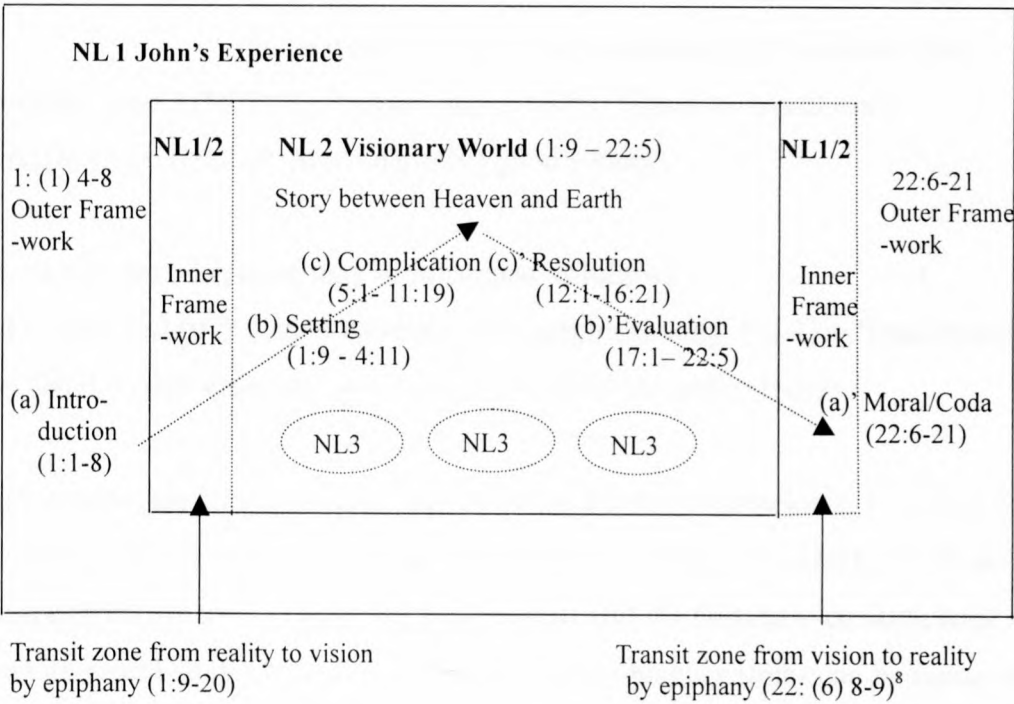


Fig.12. The Diagram for the Relationship between Narrative Levels of the Apocalypse  
(\* The dotted oval of NL3 indicates that its boundary is easily permeable/tenuous.)

The story of the Apocalypse alludes to the conflict structure between the divine (heavenly) world and the anti-divine (earthly) world as we can see through its plot, (see 4.4.2.2.).<sup>9</sup> I apply the following five levels of narrativity to John's theological narrative, a little differing from Boring's and Du Rand's though, especially to illustrate more clearly the transition (NL1/2) from the reality to the vision or vice versa.

is, Du Rand distinguishes three levels of narrativity of the Apocalypse: John and the churches' story (Narrative 1); the divine and cosmic story (Narrative level 2); the theological and God's story (Narrative level 3). For the classification of narrative levels I rely primarily on Boring (1992:702-723) and Du Rand (1997:59-72), although differing slightly from them.

<sup>8</sup> According to Boring (1992:705), there is a change in narrative level between 22:5 and 22:6. But there has already been a change from 22:1-2 to 22:3-5, from descriptive mode and the past tense (John, still in the vision, reports that "he showed me" (ἐδείξεν μοι) in 22:1) to prophetic mode in John's voice and the future tenses ("will be" (ἔσται) in 22:3). The words reminiscent of chap.1 start from 22:6, reporting the words of the angel, which become the closing outer frame. Then 22:8 changes back to John's own voice, which concludes the description of his revelatory experience.

<sup>9</sup> Their dynamic relationship may be demonstrated through the actantial model/approach which Greimas himself regards as "the permanent structure behind all narratives" (cf. Stibbe 1994:35-36).

Narrative Level 1 (NL1): John's experience/biographical story

Narr. Level 1/2 (NL1/2): Transitional-Zone story between real and visionary world

Narr. Level 2 (NL2): Visionary-World story. The interactive story occurring between  
divine world & anti-divine world along the narrative plot.

Narrative Level 3 (NL3): Embedded stories within Visionary-world story

Narrative Level 0 (NL0): Macronarrative (God's Story)

The relation between them may be illustrated as follows:

God's story (NL0) > John's experience/biographical story (NL1) > Transitional Zone  
story (NL1/2) and Visionary-world (NL2) > Embedded stories (NL3)

What is more, the boundaries between them can be shown as follows: 1:4-8 and 22:6-21  
are used as the outer brackets for the visionary-world story (1:9 -22:5); 1:9-20 and 22:6-  
9 (epiphanies) are used as the inner brackets but also the boundary-crossing zone for the  
visionary-world story (1:9 - 22:5); The three seven-plagues series can be representative  
of NL3 as embedded in the main visionary-world story. In the meantime, John as a  
reporter delivers his visionary-world experience (1:9 - 22:5) in the main visionary-world  
(the interactive story between divine & anti-divine world).

References to heavenly (divine) events and worldly (anti-divine) events in NL2

The divine story contains 4:1-11; 5:1-14 (heavenly liturgy for seal series); 6:9-11; 7:1-  
17\*(sealing 144,000 and identifying a great multitude); 8:1; 8:2-6 (heavenly liturgy for  
trumpet series); 10:1-11:13\*(last chance for prophecy and repentance); 11:14-19; 12:1-  
17; 14:1-20\*(visionary events for harvesting at the end day); 15:1-16:1(heavenly liturgy  
for bowl series); 18:1-8; 18:21-24; 19:1-10; 19:11-21; 20:1-6; 20:11-15; 21:1-22:5),  
while the cosmic story consists of 6:1-17 \*\*, 8:7-9:21\*\*, 13:1-18; 16:2-21\*\*, 17:1-18;  
18:9-20; and 20:7-10.

The asterisks (\*) refer to the interruptions by the heavenly power in the narrative plot  
which make the story dynamic/animated, rather than the so-called literary interruptions  
which prohibit the story flow.

The double asterisks (\*\*) indicate the embedded stories within the visionary-world, which, according to Boring (1992:711-713), correspond to three seven-plagues series.

Here this categorization is mainly according to the place where an event occurs and/or according to the relevant protagonist(s) for each event. However, as even the criteria is sometimes ambiguous,<sup>10</sup> this classification may, nevertheless, serve a tentative purpose to show that John's narrative consists of various narrative levels.

In this study, thus, the relationship between the narrative levels of the Apocalypse can be illustrated by the diagram above (fig. 12).

### **5.3.2. An Analysis of the First Four Levels of Narrativity in the Apocalypse**

Theological concepts play a role in binding the Apocalypse of John together, while the formal structure of the narrative also serves to reveal the theological narrative. Story has a linear flow whereas a narrative has a more arbitrary arrangement (plot) which reflects the author's intention. Therefore, the plot of John's narrative must be considered when we try to analyze the semantic structures of the narrative.

#### ***5.3.2.1. Narrative Level 1: John's Story***

Narrative level 1 is represented by the narrative framework of the book. It doesn't play only the role of brackets which surround the visionary-world story (1:9-22:5) at its beginning and end (1: (1) 4-8 and 22:6-21), but also continues throughout the narration of the visionary-world story because "apocalypse has a narrative framework" (Collins 1979:9). Thus John's experience (or story) is expressed in the letter framework but also throughout the narration of the apocalyptic vision. Thus, level 1 can be called John's experience/biographical story.

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<sup>10</sup> The narrative levels tend to fade into each other, not remaining isolated or waterproofed from each other



### 5.3.2.1.1. Framework for the Main Visionary-world Story

#### (1) Outer Framework

The letter-style framework which surrounds the visionary content (1:9-22:5) consists of 1:4-8 (introduction to the story) and 22:16-21 (conclusion of the story).<sup>11</sup> Such letter framework gives the narrative the external wrapping within which visionary stories (1:9 – 22:5) are narrated.<sup>12</sup> These parts correspond to the narrative level one (*John's story*) in that they are based on John's realistic experience (Boring 1992:704; Du Rand 1997:60). Most of the section, 1:1-8, seems to show John's theological view rather than his action/experience alone. As soon as we remember that each level of narrative implies the comprehensive narrative or macronarrative, this phase, in particular, can be thought to allude to it.

#### (2) Inner Framework as Transitory Zone (NL1/2)

The epiphanies appear both at the beginning of the setting (1:9-20) and at the beginning of the coda/moral part (22:8-9) thus forming a sort of framework that encloses the main body of the story. Moreover, it is noteworthy that they try boundary crossing, from real world (story) to visionary world (story), and vice versa (Barr 1998:37). Therefore these epiphanies as the brackets which wrap the main vision, can be said to be the transit zone into/out of the main story, even though they are episodes on their own.

### 5.3.2.1.2. Implications for the Theological Macronarrative

The various points of view imply the (theological) macronarrative in narrative level 1. The immediate point of view often changes as the narrative shifts from one level to another among orator, John, Jesus and God (Barr 1998:29). The way in which each lower-level voice embodies the voice of God, ultimately implies the ideological point of view, which pervades all the lower-level voices. In this way, each lower-level voice

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<sup>11</sup> They make the chiasmic arrangement each other in a distance – that is, at the beginning and at the end of the narrative.

<sup>12</sup> In addition, this letter framework has “the effect of personalizing and particularizing the features of the narrative to fit the particular situations of the addressees” (Boring 1992:705). It would then make the public rhetorical effect take place when the audience believes it is addressed to themselves or a reader believes it is written for himself/herself.

formulates and implies an implied author's theological point of view (theological macronarrative).

### Imminence

John opens his vision with a temporal point of view that the end is imminent (1:1,3), and closes with the same temporal perspective at the conclusion of the book (22:6,7,10,12,20). The reason for not sealing up the words of prophecy of the Apocalypse is that "the time is near" (22:10). The imminence of the End invests the book with a sense of urgency. This means that the nearer a reader feels that the End time is, the more relevant John's message is to him or her. Therefore, from the temporal point of view, there seems to be little emphasis on the future. Emphasizing that the end is imminent, John describes Jesus Christ as "*the one coming*" (ὁ ἐρχόμενος) (1:4) in a present, not a future, participle or as "*who is coming*" (ἐρχεται) (1:7) in the present tense. Barr (1998:31) argues that "John tends to avoid positing a future for God so that God is said to be the One coming; such a coming will be a major motif of the story."<sup>13</sup>

But here we must note Resseguie's comment that "the blending of past, present, and future makes it difficult to distinguish future events from past or present events" (1998:46), because all events turn on the Lamb's victory on the cross in the middle point of creation and eschaton. The present and future world order has been determined by the Lamb's victory on the cross (past). The readers, including the first readers but also the reader today, live somewhere between a present world order and a new, yet-to-be-realized world order. Thus when John speaks of the immanency of the end ("what must soon take place" (1:1)), he envisions a new world order, "the kingdom of God" (or New Jerusalem) that begins with the Lamb's death and is completed at his second coming. As a result, the immanent events encompass the past, present, and future. John's vision is "equally concerned with the interpretation of past and present and the anticipation of the future" (Caird 1966:26) and each temporal zone mixing throughout the book so delicately, is difficult to distinguish separately from the others. Moreover,

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<sup>13</sup> He (:31) adds that "even if a reader tries to get a future, he finds only God already there, coming to meet them." Such present name of God, ὁ ὢν, traces back to the self disclosure of God to Moses before he sent him to the Israelites to deliver them from Egypt in the Exodus story, in the context of the salvation of his people (Exod 3:14).

God is always the same. The very God, the one who is, who was, and who is coming (ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος), controls all events in the present, the past and the future:<sup>14</sup>

This narrative level presupposes and implies the comprehensive narrative (the theological macronarrative) in that the bulk of this section is related to God's (1:1, 8; 22:6-7, 18-19), Jesus' (1:4-7; 22:12-13,16,20,21), and the Spirit's (1:4; 22:17) story.

### The Witness

Jesus is introduced as *the faithful witness* because he bore testimony to God's truth (1:5), culminating in sacrificing his life. In the Apocalypse, "his ultimate testimony is his death, so the two are not in any real tension" (Barr 1998: 28).<sup>15</sup>

It is the code of conduct for the faithful on earth, namely, to witness unto death, which is developed/emphasized repeatedly as the story goes on. Therefore the witnessing actions of the faithful, such as John or His servants, are associated with or imply that of Jesus Christ in the theological macrostructure.

### The Ambiguity of the Voice

It is worth taking note of the ambiguity of the voice in relation to the theological macronarrative. "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1)<sup>16</sup> which functions as the title for the work is the opening declaration which someone speaks to the audience. And yet, whose voice is this at all? the voice of God? of Jesus? of John? of someone else? According to Barr (1998:27), "whatever its source, the voice boldly declares the nature and origin of our story: it is a revelation of Jesus Christ given by God. Thus the implicit point of view is divine; God is the ultimate source of this story."

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<sup>14</sup> Based on 1:19, some interpreters argue that the past refers to the vision of Jesus ("the one like the Son of Man") and the present to the letters to the seven churches and the future to chapters 4 - 22. Others like Caird (1966:26) thinks of this as a "grotesque over-simplification."

<sup>15</sup> The two words "witness" and "martyr" in English have the cognate μάρτυς in Greek, resulting in the ultimate testimony of laying down one's life.

<sup>16</sup> "The revelation of Jesus" (1:1) exhibits two sides; it is both the testimony *about* Jesus (that is, the gospel story) and the testimony *belonging to* Jesus (that is, what he testified).



Another example of ambiguous voice is found in the beatitude of 1:3. It is implied that John speaks for the divine. In the context of worship as the implied setting of the story, “the manifest identity of the speaking voice is the public reader .... who also functions as the narrator” (Barr 1998:29). But this immediate identification leads to a difficulty because the point of view of this sentence is clearly not that of the public reader; someone else pronounces the blessing. Then with whose voice is the public reader speaking in this beatitude? Firstly, the public reader is using the voice of John, the implied author, but in a deeper implication, John in turn speaks for the divine voice. By reading John’s words out loud, the public reader once again caused words to live again<sup>17</sup> and empowered the audience. Thus, this voice also can be said to speak for the divine at a theological macronarrative level.

The story world of the book assumes a hierarchical structure like the life world of the audience, where all power and action flow from above. Barr (1998:28) argues that the hierarchical chain of transmission (God to Jesus to messenger to John to servants) in the story world of the Apocalypse “mirrors the political world of the Roman era, where a remote emperor ruled through a series of representatives.” It is this world above (the macronarrative world) that he now is about to show, which is used as the overarching frame on which our story is woven.

### ***5.3.2.2. Narrative Level 2 as the Main Visionary-World Story***

#### **5.3.2.2.1. The Divine and Anti-divine Story**

Narrative level 2 is constituted by the actions within the visionary experience of John. This level primarily contains what happens in the visionary world: the interaction occurring between the divine world and the anti-divine world along the narrative plot. These stories, however, focus on “one on the throne” as an initiator of all events in the whole narrative.<sup>18</sup> Although from the viewpoint of the earthly world, the evil powers

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<sup>17</sup> The Greek word ἀναγινώσκω (corresponding to the English verb “to read”) has the root meaning to come into being once again.

<sup>18</sup> Here “Word” is a quite inadequate rendering of the Greek “λόγος” but “in philosophy it often denotes an ultimate principle of truth or reason while in Christian theology ‘λόγος’ refers to the word of God as

seem to prevail, the visionary world story shows that God rules. In this sense, it can be called the divine-dominant story (cf. Boring 1992:704, 707-711).

The relationship between the narrative levels can be described:

All the anti-divine world stories (including narrative level 3) within 1:9 - 22:5 are bound to be controlled by divine world story in narrative level 2 as well as narrative level 1 (John's story) and narrative level 0 (macronarrative) – that is, the macronarrative (NL0) > John's story/report (NL1) > the transitory zone story (NL1/2) and the primary visionary story (NL2) > the secondary/embedded story (NL3).

If a *diegetic* level of a narrative can be represented by the main visionary story (1:9 - 22:5) of narrative level 2, an *extradiegetic* level, as a higher level like narrative level 1, stands outside the sphere of the main story and is represented by the letter style framework (1:1-8 and 22:6-21), while a lower level under the main narrative known as *hypodiegetic* can be represented by an embedded story-within-the-story (which corresponds to narrative level 3) such as the plagues occurring when seven seals are opened, seven trumpets are blown, and seven bowls are poured. Briefly, thus, narrative 3 is ruled by narrative levels 2 and 1 and narrative level 2 is controlled by level 1. But all of these in turn imply the macrostructure of the book.

#### 5.3.2.2.2. Implications for the Theological Macronarrative

##### The Setting Phase: 1:9 – 4:22

Role of the Epiphany (1:9-20 and 22:8-9) is “transit zones” between reality and vision: This part (1:9-20) plays the role of a transition section from the realistic story to the visionary story. This seems obvious from the expression “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day” (1:9). John moves to the visionary world where the Spirit, as a prophetic witness, will show and explain to him “what must soon take place” (1:1). From a social perspective, Barr (1998:34-35) explains the transition role by means of the expression

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‘the origin and foundation of all things’” (Baldick 1990:125).

“boundary crossing”:

There are numerous times in our lives when we cross over the boundary of ordinary reality into some special enclave, where the rules and procedures of everyday life no longer pertain: a ball game, a theatrical performance, a move, a trip. Within these enclaves we experience another world – an altered state of consciousness.

Likewise the author of this book leads its audience into a new reality, a visionary world, where they realize that Jesus still stands in the midst of the churches and instructs them (2:1-3:22) and the one on the throne is in control of all events happening on the earth as well as in heaven (4:1-11). In this visionary world, differently from their reality where they are subjected to oppression or persecution, they experience their victory over and the final defeat of the evil powers. The epiphanies at 1:9 – 20 and 22:8 – 9, as the frame which wraps the main vision, can be said to be the transiting gates into the main story, even though each is an episode on its own.<sup>19</sup> The story then alternates between earthly events and heavenly events until finally the author draws the audience back to their real world where the epiphany (22:8-9) indicates an exit from the visionary world or the entrance to reality. At that point, however, their real world won't appear the same as when they first began to hear the visionary story, because their consciousness will be sure to have changed, if they are a prudent audience.

The epiphany of 1:9-20 shows that John just moves from the real world's experience to the visionary world, when he “was in the Spirit on the Lord's day...” (1:10). The later epiphany of 22:(6) 8-9, on the other hand, appears when John moves from the visionary world to the real world, but he is just “out of the Spirit” because John reports that he has already finished hearing and seeing these things (22:8) and has come back to his senses or to the real world. However, 22:6 is the actual beginning of the narrative framework in which the whole is surrounded, reporting the words reminiscent of chapter one: “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place” (22:6) (Boring 1992:705).

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<sup>19</sup> If the prologue and epilogue of the letter (1:4-8 and 22:18-21) are the outer brackets, the epiphanies (1:9-20 and 22:8-9) correspond to the inner brackets for the Apocalypse of John.



### **(1) The earthly setting (2:1-3:22)**

From this setting phase, a dual-world structure (that is, the heavenly world and the earthly world) appears in obvious contrast, though the conflict is not yet developed. John's experience and that of the earthly church (1:9-20 and 2:1-3:22 respectively) provide the earthly setting for this visionary story, while 4:1-11 (the description of the heavenly court whose "one seated on the throne" is at the center) provides some of the heavenly setting for this story. Although the opposite dual-worlds are suggested separately at the setting phase, as the plot of the Apocalypse develops, the two worlds interact with and influence each other until fulfillment of the prophecy: "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Borrowing Resseguie's words (1998:43), "the *above/below* dichotomy is resolved in the New Jerusalem in which the *above* and *below* are merged in perfect unity: the new heaven (*above*) and the new earth (*below*). No longer are the two realms estranged from each other."

Are the letters to the seven churches part of the real story or the visionary story?

The letters to the seven churches have been treated as real, not visionary, story, but from several points of view, they can be seen as part of the visionary story (narrative level 2). The messages to the seven churches seem to be the real letters but, in fact, the whole book itself should be considered as the real letter to the seven churches. In the first place, the messages from 2:1 to 3:22 are reported "in the Spirit" (1:10). Secondly, Jesus directly addresses the angel of each church who is a symbolic, not real, figure, (2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14). Thirdly, some characters that appear in the letters seem to be symbolic rather than real - e.g., the Nicolaitans (2:15), a prophetess Jezebel (2:20) etc (cf. Barr 1998:50-51). Finally, at the end of each letter, each refrain ("let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches") expands its own unique message to the universal church (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). Therefore, the messages to the seven churches should be part of the visionary-world story (NL2).

Here another question of this letter-style vision should be asked: Can a letter be a story? According to Barr (1998:41-42), "if stories did not refer to the real world, if they were

wholly fictional, they would be incomprehensible.” He goes on to explain that the dual aspect of stories, with both imaginative and realistic features, allows us to explore letters from narrative and real-world perspectives. From the imaginary world of narratives, we must reconstruct their real world situations, whereas letters reflect the real world and we must imagine their story. Jesus’ revelation in a particular way to each of the seven churches, the situation of the church, and the promise of victory correspond to and imply a certain story.” Petersen (1985:9) epitomized this: “In narratives, the message is in the story. In letters, the story is in the message.”

Thus the story narrated in the letter (2:1 –3:22) and the epiphany on Patmos both, together form the earthly setting for the whole story. The appearance of Jesus serves as their common character and also emphasizes to the audience the divine mandate behind this story. The specific mentioning of the seven churches (1:11) immediately precedes the letter-style story (2:1-3:22) and creates a strong sense of connection between John’s experience (1:9-20) and the messages to the seven churches (2:1-3:22).

Aspects of this story seem to express the experience of God’s people, the constant theme being perseverance in anticipation of victory. The present battle of these seven churches is portrayed at a deeper level as another sign of the age-old cosmic battle between Satan and God<sup>20</sup> (Barr 1998:53). The conflict between the churches as God’s followers and their enemies as Satan’s followers will develop as the story goes on. The rewards for “he who conquers and who keeps his words until the end” mostly appear at the end of the book (chapter 21 and 22).<sup>21</sup>

An Ambiguous Voice is used as a Narrating Technique to persuade the Audience

Who is the narrator of the letters? John (1:9) or Jesus (1:10; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14) or the Spirit (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22)? The public reader adopts several voices in this scene;

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<sup>20</sup> In particular, the verses mentioning Satan imply this battle: 2:9,10,13,24; 3:9.

<sup>21</sup> The correlations are not perfect, but are close enough to give the sense that things are working out as expected: 2:7 to 22:2 and 22:14 for “the tree of life”; 2:11 to 20:6 for “the second life”; 2:17 to 19:12 for “a (new) name”; 2:26-28 (“an iron rode” and “the morning star”) to 20:4 (reigned with Christ a thousand years) and 22:16 (“the bright morning star”); 3:5 to 20:15 for “the book of life”; 3:12 (“the temple of my God” and “my own new name” and “the new Jerusalem”) to 21:22 (“its temple”) and 19:12 (“a name”)

the audience would hear the public reader alternating between the voices of the Spirit, John, and Jesus. According to Barr (1998:36), the public reader addresses first as John (1:9), then in the guise of Jesus (1:10-11), the voice which eventually dominates the scene (all of 2:1-3:22), but a voice which, in turn, changes to that of the Spirit (2:7,11, etc.). John, as overt narrator, narrates from only a limited point of view, having no extra knowledge of either events or of the inner life of other characters. He is the person who needs to have things explained to him (1:20). He reports only what he heard and saw. On the other hand, Jesus, another overt (although divine) narrator claims to surpass all kind of human limits: either by time and space (1:17, 19) or by knowledge (2:10,23; 3:1,17). But all his words, in turn, become the voice of the Spirit (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). Using the interchanging voice obscures who is the real narrator. This kind of narrating technique aims to effectively persuade the audience, apropos of which, Barr (1998:36) mentions that it would be difficult to find another device that would give more authority to his message:

In fact John has obscured both ends of this communication. Rather than an address from John to the churches, these are messages from Jesus to the angels of the churches. Such a device allows John to maintain his position as “brother” and still offer the most authoritative praise and blame.

In a summary, using this literary technique, John presents the divine point of view, which in turn points to the theology of the Apocalypse, the macronarrative.

## (2) Heavenly Setting (Chapter four)

Chapter 4 describes the heavenly setting which centers on “one seated on the throne.” The seven spirits of God (4:5) (before the throne) accompany four living creatures (4:6-9) and twenty-four elders (4:10-11) at its periphery. That God is an initiator behind all events in heaven as well as on earth is implied in “flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder” issuing from the throne, which are repeated at significant moments of the terrifying events on the earth (4:5; cf. 8:5, 11:19, 16:17-18). Furthermore, the

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and 21:2 (“the new Jerusalem”); 3:21 to 20:4 for “throne,” to mention a few.



heavenly beings' praises, in a deep sense, imply that God, as the creator but also as the patron of all his creatures, tries to restore all his creatures placed in an unstable state by the evil powers, according to his good will ("Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (4:8) and "...for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created" (4:8-11).

John adopts an *above/below* point of view that contrasts a heavenly perspective with an earthly point of view. The *above* may contradict, illuminate, correct, or overturn the limited perspective of *below*. In Revelation 2 and 3, John reveals to the seven churches internal problems of complacency and compromise: the *below* perspective. In chapter 4, the scene shifts to *heaven* where the *above* point of view is seen. When the church faces external attacks in the form of persecutions by the beast and the inhabitants of the earth, from a *below* perspective, they seem to triumph over the church, while from an *above* perspective their victory is only short-lived (Resseguie 1998:43).

Finally, the victory is certain. God sits on the throne around which twenty-four elders are seated on their thrones, clad in "white garments," with "golden crowns" upon their heads, which means the victory is theirs over the evil powers in heaven. This already-realized victory on high will transform the unstable state of the perimeter or the below world: "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In this way, the above/center perspective alludes to the divine story or the faith of the implied author and, ultimately, to the theological macronarrative of the Apocalypse of John.

### **(3) Complication Phase: 5:1 – 11:19**

#### **Chapter 5**

The center in chapter four is "one seated on the throne," as an initiator of all events, in the heavenly court, while the center in chapter five shifts from "one seated on the throne" to the Lamb, as an executor of God's will, who set the story in motion.

Similarly, in chapter 5, the author focuses on a scroll in the right hand of the one seated on the throne. Then his vision moves outward to describe the Lamb between the throne

and four living creatures. From there it expands still further: to the four living creatures and twenty-four elders, to the myriads and myriads of angels, and then to every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. By focusing on the scroll and the Lamb at the center, John places what is most important in his vision at the focal point (Resseguie 1998:39).

In the Apocalypse, the seeing often reinterprets the hearing or vice versa. In chapter 5, John *hears* about a lion (5:5) and *sees* a Lamb (5:6). The lion of the tribe of Judah is interpreted by what John sees: death on the cross (the Lamb) is not defeat but is, rather, the way to power and victory (the Lion). The traditional expectation of messianic conquest by military deliverance (the Lion of Judah) is reinterpreted so that messianic conquest occurs through sacrificial death (the Lamb) (:36-37).

Conversely, the hymns of chapter 5 can serve as an example of the principle of “the hearing interprets the seeing” in the book. To the Lamb a new song must be sung by all creatures: the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (5:9-10) and the unnumbered angels (5:12) and every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein (5:13). In this instance, the hearing not only identifies the attributes of God and Christ, but also communicates the deepest meaning of what John sees: the slain Lamb ransoms men for God and makes them a kingdom and priest to God and they shall reign on earth (5:9-10).

Chapter 5 contains an event that is unexpected for the characters, in this case John “wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it” (5:4), which characterizes the complication phase (5:1- 11:19): the Lamb, taking the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne, sets in motion the whole story toward the paradise regained, the New Jerusalem, to be reached at the end of the story. The voluntary and active action of the Lamb is made up of the important aspects in understanding the theology that the implied author delivers to his audience, that is, the theological macronarrative of the book.

The Heavenly Liturgy Preceding Each of Three Seven-plague Series

Each of three series of seven seals, trumpets and bowls on the earth has its own preparatory liturgy in heaven (5:1-14; 8:2-6; 15:1-16:1 respectively). The liturgy is followed by a series of plagues in the earthly world. And each series of horrible events on earth ends with the heavenly response/pronouncement: “silence in heaven for about half an hour” (8:1), the prophetic pronouncement of “the kingdom of the Lord” (11:15) and the announcement of the final result “It is done!” (16:17) respectively. This strongly implies that the salvation and the judgment of the world are headed by the Lamb as an executor and God as an initiator behind all the events on the earth. It in turn addresses the view of the implied author’s theology, the theological macronarrative.

## Chapter 6

The plagues of the seven seals and the seven trumpets and the seven bowls constitute representative examples of the earthly (anti-divine) story ruled by the heavenly (divine) story but also narrative level 1 (John’s story). Further discussion of the earthly (anti-divine) stories will be done later.

We face a strange event at the fifth seal, the cry of the martyrs (6:9-11). This does not seem to be a plague on earth, but viewed from the point of the earthly (anti-divine) world, the crying of the slain under the altar on account of the word of God and for their witness (6:9) must hasten the judgment and vengeance on the inhabitants of the earth (6:10). It will be imminent, or a little later, because they are “told to rest a little longer” (6:11). That is, viewed from the point of the earthly narrative, it would be another plague from the viewpoint of the earthly inhabitants.

## Chapter 7

The principle of “seeing interprets hearing or vice versa” in the Apocalypse applies also to chapter 7. John *hears* 144,000 (7:4) but *sees* a great multitude (7:9). The two are not separate, but mutually interpret each other. The countless multitude is the outward reality, while the 144,000 represent the inner truth which symbolizes the true Israel of God, which includes all – both Jew and Greek (Resseguie 1998:9,34,56-57).

From the spatial point of view, the throne and the Lamb at the center is the source of life



for the great multitude at the perimeter: “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat; *for the Lamb in the midst of the throne* will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (7:16-17)” (:39).

This chapter functions as an answer or response from heaven to the question of survival from the earthly habitants’ viewpoint (“for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?” (6:17)). The dual-world structure draws forward the plot of the story into complication through resolution to evaluation by their “action and reaction” or “challenge and response,” or “an earthly event and a heavenly interruption” and so on. Chapter 7 reveals the will of God to save his servants 144,000 by sealing their foreheads (7:1-8) and to reward his people who have come out of the great tribulation, by “sheltering them with his presence” (7:9-17), all of which imply the theological macronarrative.

#### Chapter 8-9

As we have stated, the seven seals’ plagues, seven trumpets’ plagues and seven bowls’ plagues are representative examples constituting the earthly (anti-divine) world story, according to Boring (1992:711-713), ruled by the heavenly (divine) story and also narrative level 1 (John’s story).

We need to note that like other series of plagues (5:1-14 for the seven-seals’ plagues and 15:1-16:1 for the seven-bowls’ plagues), the seven-trumpets’ series has its own liturgy (8:2-6). But the seven-trumpets’ plagues, represented by the worldly (anti-divine) story, are initiated by such a heavenly story/event. The further discussion of the earthly (anti-divine) world story will be done later.

#### Chapter 10-11

Chapter 10 is related to “witness”: the reason they have to witness is that the end is near - “there should be no more delay” (10:6); the content is “the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled” (10:7). This provides a last opportunity for the inhabitants of the earth to repent and be saved, as the rest of

mankind did not repent even after the sixth trumpet plague (9:21).<sup>22</sup> In connection with witnessing activity until the end day, this chapter reveals the will of God to save his people - “This [is] to fulfill the word which he had spoken, ‘of those whom thou gavest me I lost not one’” (Jn 18:9).

In chapter 11, John places the two witnesses at the center of the event, while their enemies, “the inhabitants of the earth,” form the perimeter (11:10). The center of this vision (two witnesses - their death as well as their testimony) transforms the perimeter (their enemies) because their efforts of witnessing yield the repentance of the rest who “were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven” (11:13).

The *above* point of view may overturn the perspective of *below*. From a *below* perspective, Satan’s followers defeat the saints (11:7), but from an *above* perspective, the saints defeat Satan (12:11). From a *below* perspective the beast and the inhabitants of the earth triumph over the church (11:7-10), but from an *above* perspective that victory is ephemeral (11:11).

But their tenacious (and continuous) insurgency or rebellion to God and his people needs to be finished. The necessity establishes the resolution phase on the plot of the narrative; To overturn a below perspective and to provide for the faithful the heavenly perspective about the conflict between the church and the evil powers experienced on the earth, the author shows in the resolution phase the complete defeat of the evil powers.

#### **(4) Resolution phase (12:1 – 16:21)**

The conflict phase is in fact just the preliminary phase in solving the problem/ conflict, regardless of events such as opening the seals or blowing the trumpets, because these do not lead to the obvious, ultimate results.<sup>23</sup> However, at the liturgy for pouring the bowls,

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<sup>22</sup> The effort succeeded in some people returning to God (11:13).

<sup>23</sup> After the opening of the seventh seal, there is only silence (8:1). After the seventh trumpet he hears a prophetic voice announcing the coming of the kingdom of God (11:15). But after the pouring out of the seventh bowl, he hears a final announcement from the throne “It is done!” (16:17).

a ceremony formally assigning the seven bowls to the seven angels let us expect the ultimate resolution against the evil powers: in the seven bowls' liturgy the obvious mission assignment is shown - "And one of the four living creatures *gave* the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God" (15:7).

All the events in this phase are reported by John (narrative level 1) but they are also part of the visionary story (narrative level 2) and sometimes the main visionary story contains the embedded stories, such as the seven bowls' plagues (narrative level 3), although these are often difficult to separate from one another because they are mixed. But the stories of narrative levels 1, 2, and 3 all draw their real meaning from the theological macronarrative.

## Chapter 12

The principle "hearing interprets seeing" can be applied to Micael's war against Satan (12:7-12). Although John *sees* a heavenly battle between Michael and Satan (12:7-9), he does not know the meaning of the struggle until it is interpreted by a voice "...But *they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, ...*" (12:10-11). In 12:7-9 Michael's cosmic battle with Satan represents an *above* perspective of what takes place below, on earth. This refer to the crucifixion rather than to a primordial account of the fall of Satan or an eschatological battle (12:10-11). Caird (1966:154) holds that "Michael's victory is simply the heavenly and symbolic counterpart of the earthly reality of the Cross. Michael, in fact, is not the field officer who does the actual fighting, but the staff officer in the heavenly control room, who is able to remove Satan's flag from the heavenly map because the real victory has been won on Calvary."

God's followers and Satan's followers express different psychological responses to the plagues. The reaction of characters to events in the Apocalypse is twofold: they either respond with amazement, praise, and terrifying fear that results in glorifying God (11:13) or they react to God's judgment by cursing God's name and remaining stubborn (6:16, 9:20 – 21, 16:9, 16:11, 16:21). These contrasting responses also occur at the sixth seal, the sixth trumpet, and the fourth, the fifth and the seventh bowl. Similarly, the



inhabitants' psychological reaction to events is to glorify or curse God. The point is that they think the plagues come from God. This shows, therefore, that the earthly events are under the control of the heavenly story and in turn the response to the earthly events is projected back to the divine world in two ways, sometimes glorifying God or sometimes cursing the name of God.

### Chapter 13

The principle “hearing interprets seeing or vice versa” is well applied to 13:11 where John *sees* a beast come out of the earth with two horns like a lamb, but he *hears* the voice of a dragon; despite the innocent external appearance of the beast, its speech discloses its true character.

### Chapter 14

The reaping episode at the harvest of the earth 14:13-16 is contrasted with 14:17-20; the former means the salvation of the faithful, while the latter means the judgment of the evildoers. The condition of “either salvation or judgment” depends on whether “the dead die in the Lord” (14:13). And the executor for salvation and judgment reveals “the one like the Son of Man.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, from the above viewpoint, the vision of Jesus harvesting cannot be seen by the Christian as a fearful sight, but the fulfillment of His promises for them.

### Chapter 15

This chapter shows the preparing liturgy for pouring the seven bowls which consists of the inauguration of the last seven plagues (15:1), the praising God (15:2-4), the vestiture of seven golden bowls to the seven angels, and the commission to pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God (16:1). This chapter, thus, indicates God's story, the theological macronarrative.

### Chapter 16

Seven bowls' plagues together with seven seals' plagues and seven trumpets' plagues

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<sup>24</sup> In the case of the judgment, however, “the one like the Son of Man” doesn't appear here but in 19:15 (“he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God of the Almighty”).

are representative examples constituting the anti-divine (worldly) stories, which are ruled by the divine (heavenly) story and also narrative level 1 (John's story).

We need to note that like the other series of plagues (5:1-14 for the seven-seals' plagues and 8:2-6 for the seven-trumpets' plagues), the seven-bowls' series has its own liturgy (15:1-16:1)). So the seven-bowls' plagues, the anti-divine (worldly) stories, are initiated by such divine (heavenly) story. Further discussion of the anti-divine (worldly) story will be dealt with later.

### **(5) Evaluation Phase (17:1 – 22:5)**

This phase no longer shows the linear flow. As mentioned earlier, the whole section appears to encapsulate his evaluation up to this point by means of quite an obvious chiasmic structure. Here it is not until at the end of the evaluation phase that the dual plot line disappears with new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (21:2). What belongs to the earth has been reflecting on what is in heaven, if incompletely. Thompson (1990) refers to this as "homologue." But now we have got to the complete condition that "thy will has been done on earth as it is in heaven." In other words, "Paradise" lost since the first Adam and Satan swayed into chaos is recovered in the new Jerusalem, "Paradise Regained," by means of Jesus' salvation and judgment based on his sacrifice on the cross (5:5,9; cf. 19:13). Thus we realize that God's story is behind all the stories, from each episode of which can be distilled a deep theological meaning, in keeping with the intention of John, the implied author.

From a *below (on earth)* perspective, the beast and the inhabitants of the earth triumph over the church, but from an *above (in heaven)* perspective the kingdom of the world comes to an end soon. From the *below* perspective, Babylon is a "great city," admired for its fine adornment and its entire splendor and glory (17:4-5). However, from the *above* viewpoint, Babylon is ephemeral, becoming fallen, a dwelling place of demons, and a haunt of every unclean thing (18:2). The dual-world order is resolved in the New Jerusalem in which the two realms are merged in perfect unity. They are not alienated from each other any more.

## Chapters 17 - 18

From the spatial point of view, chapters 17-18 and chapters 21-22 represent a very different type of center's function. The fall of "the great harlot," the center in the former, disorients its perimeter, the kings (18:9), merchants (18:15), shipmasters, and sailors (18:17) while the establishment of the New Jerusalem, the center of the latter, floods with his life-giving (22:2), life-transforming light (22:5) the perimeter, his servants.

In chapter 17 and 18, Babylon seems to be at the center of the vision but it should be narrated/understood from the above point of view (17:1, 3; 18:1-8). From the heavenly viewpoint, the fall of Babylon, "the great harlot," just plays a role of foil against the establishment of New Jerusalem, "the Lamb's bride" (chapter 21-22.)

## Chapter 19 -20

In the eschatological battle in 19:11-21, the author tries to correct/overturn the hearers'/readers' wrong values or a fixed ideas about the saint's battle against the evil powers: Jesus Christ on a white horse makes war on the beast and the kings of the earth with the word of God instead of a sharp sword used in the battle (19:15), in other words He will defeat all his enemies through God's word and through Christ's death on the cross. John's ideological point of view frames a new definition of conquest (Resseguie 1998:10, cf. Barr 1984:42). This point of view adds some significant aspects to the theological macronarrative, God's story.

In John's description of the millennial kingdom (20:1-10), the dragon is thrown into the pit, at the perimeter, while the saints are seated on throne, at the center. When the thousand years are ended, Satan is loosed from his prison to gather the nations for attacking the saints. When they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, the nations are at the perimeter and the saints are at the center of the world (20:9).

From the spatial point of view, the real character between the perimeter and the center are contrasted: the nations at the perimeter remains resistant to the truth and follow Satan, while the saints at the center remains invincible and loyal to God. Thus, the



millennial kingdom spatially depicts the ideological point of view that evil cannot overcome good in spite of its persistent attack, which implies the implied author's theology.

#### Chapter 21:1- 22:6

John begins with a description of the dazzling brilliance of “the one like the Son of Man” in chapter one and ends with the splendor of God and the Lamb in chapter 22 (esp. 22:5). According to Resseguie (1998: 41), this forms a kind of *inclusio*, so that John underscores the ideological perspective that God and the Lamb are the center of the world, illumining and transforming a darkened world.<sup>25</sup> This section, thus, also alludes to God's story, the theological macronarrative.

#### 5.3.2.3. Narrative Level 3 as *The Embedded Visionary Stories*

##### 5.3.2.3.1. The Worldly Events ruled by the Heavenly Events

Narrative level 3, according to Boring (1992:711-713), consists of the secondary visions like the breaking of seals, sounding of trumpets and outpouring of bowls, which are embedded in or influenced by the heavenly visions. These horrible acts are happening to or being perpetrated by Satan, the evil-beings and his followers.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, this level's dramatic acts can preferably be called the anti-divine-dominant story (cf. Boring 1992:704, 711-713).

The secondary/embedded visions (NL3) are scattered in the main visionary story. And as most of them consist of the horrible stories, one could easily get the impression that they are not God's story, the theological narrative. According to Boring (1992:712), “this is remedied when one remembers that level 3 derives from level 2, that Christ appears over and behind the visions, but not in them.” The violent terror of the level 3

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<sup>25</sup> The outside feature of the city consists of precious jewels, reflecting the light at the center. The light at the center of the city, the glory of God, is the source of all secondary sources of light - the moon, sun, and artificial lights.

<sup>26</sup> As Sweet (1979:139) puts it, what looks like “mere carnage” has a deeper theological meaning: It is a necessary prelude to the arrival of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom over the world.

narratives will be utterly misunderstood unless it is remembered that they are a secondary play-within-a-play. This can be proven especially by the fact that each plague-series of seven seals (6:1-17; 8:1), seven trumpets (8:7-21; 11:14-19) and seven bowls (16:2-21) starts from its own heavenly liturgy (5:1-14, 8:2-6, 15:1-16:1 respectively). They start with the self-giving sacrificial *Lamb* taking the scroll (5:7), with the angel filling the censer with fire from the altar before *God* and throwing it on the earth (8:5), and with “a loud voice from the temple” telling the seven angels to go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of *God* (16:1). This again means that the deep meanings of the events should withdraw from *God’s* story, the theological macronarrative of the book.

#### **5.3.2.3.2. Implication for the Theological Macronarrative**

The terrible scenes in which the Divinity never appears are theological only in the sense that all the eschatological drama proceeds from the heavenly liturgy before the throne. Consequently, the author reminds the hearer/readers of the overarching theological macronarrative (NL0) within which the visions are contained, by interspersing references within them to the macronarrative. Thus although the divinity appears to be mentioned only a few times, this is still enough to tie these anti-divine visions (level 3) to *God’s* story (NL 0), the theological macronarrative.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the Apocalypse cannot be interpreted piecemeal; John’s narrative strategy should be applied to the whole text. While the narrative levels are clearly distinct, they are not independent, but interact with each other.

To summarize, all levels interact with each other, each level alludes to the higher narrative levels and a vision of the lower level draws the real meaning from a vision at the higher level. Therefore, the theological meaning of the plotted narratives (NL 1, 1/2, 2 and 3) is not found in themselves, but its meaning should be drawn from the higher narrative level, ultimately from macronarrative (NL0).

#### ***5.3.2.4. John's Narrative Strategy: Interaction of the Narrative Levels***

The macronarrative (NL0) can be said to be the most significant in that it expresses John's theological idea, and the most comprehensive in that it sweeps all time and history. On the other hand, John's experience/report (NL1) is the most extensive/permeated level of the levels plotted in John's narrative. It contains the lower levels (NL 1/2, 2 and 3) but not the other way round. John plays a role of letter-writer in epistolary introduction (1:1-8) and conclusion (22:6-21) and of a reporter of visionary events (1:9-22:5). Therefore all lower levels are embedded in it (NL1) and subordinated to it.

John's narrative strategy through this epistolary framework keeps the audience from forgetting that the primary address of the narrative is to them and all the dramatic visions are arranged to change or overturn their world view in their historical-rhetorical situation.

Visionary narrative (level 2) is represented by the events occurred in the visionary world. This level constitutes the opposite conflict structure interacting between heavenly-world events and earthly-world events. The conflicting structure develops along the plot of main visionary story: setting (or situation, status quo of the two worlds) (1:9 - 4:11); complication (5:1 - 11:19); resolution (12:1 - 16:21); evaluation (17:1 - 22:5); moral/coda (22:6-21).

In an analogous manner as the various voices and figures all tend to modulate into the voice of God (Boring 1992:721), so levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3 sometimes fade into each other. On the other hand, all the plotted levels (1, 1/2, 2 and 3) are destined to draw their meaning from the unplotted theological macronarrative (level 0). Such an interaction of the narrative levels prevents us from applying chronological scheme or straightforward linearity to John's narrative. Instead, John's narrative must be theological-theme-oriented, which turns on God's will and activity to "make all things new" (21:5) or to establish his reign/his kingdom on earth.



5.4. Macronarrative: God’s Story with a Link to the Timeframe (NL0)

The smaller narratives at levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3 imply the existence of a larger theological narrative and point beyond themselves at crucial points. The smaller narratives are only fragmentary expressions of the narrative theology of the Apocalypse. Thus, when we try to identify the theology which John, the implied author, wants to deliver to the readers/audience of the book, it is thus necessary to reconstruct this presupposed narrative.

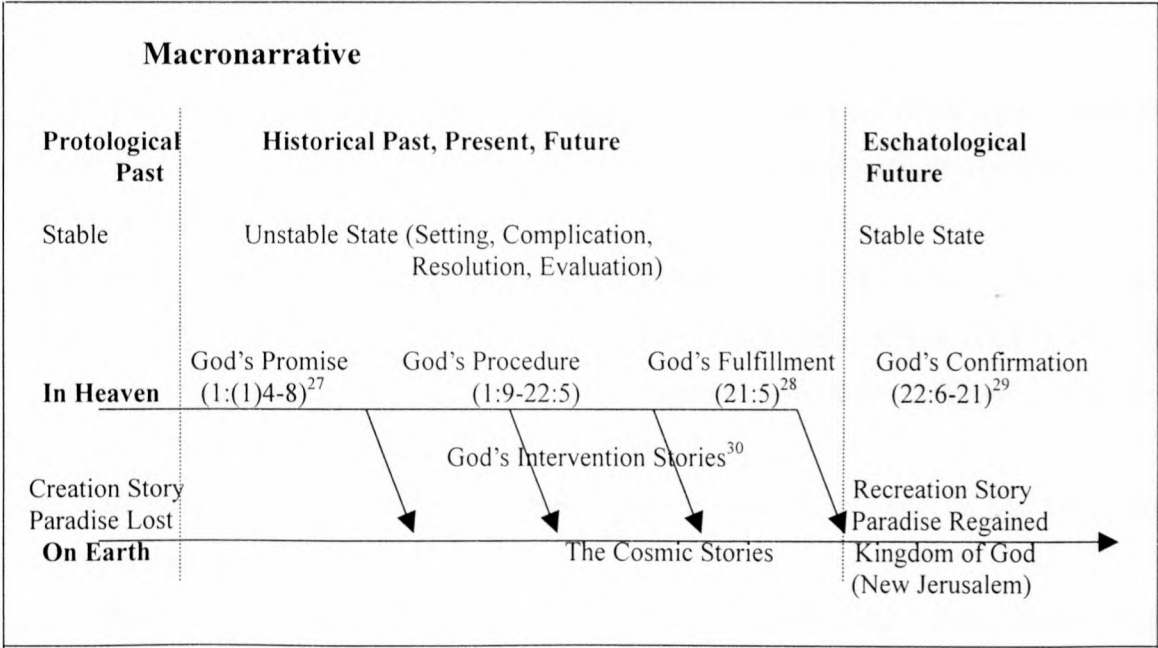


Fig. 13. Macronarrative (NL0): God’s Activity from the Beginning to the End

The theological macronarrative focus on God’s activity. The theological story can be classified into story about God, as initiator behind all events, story about Jesus, as executor, story about the Holy Spirit, as revealer. Insofar as actions are concerned, the triune God’s activity seems to be comparatively minor/passive in the plotted story.

<sup>27</sup> “Behold, he is coming...” (1:7).  
<sup>28</sup> He, sitting upon the throne, proclaims “Behold, I make all things new” (21:5).  
<sup>29</sup> “Surely, I am coming soon.” (1:20).  
<sup>30</sup> See chap 5.3.1. The divine episodes (such as 7:1-17, 10:1-11:13, 14:1-20) may refer to the interruptions by the heavenly power which make the story dynamic/animated, rather than just the so-called literary interruptions which prohibit the story flow.

Nevertheless, they are the main characters in the theological macronarrative of the Apocalypse (the theological story according to content).

This theological macronarrative, God's story, can be expounded with a link to the timeframe (Du Rand 1997:63-65, Boring 1992:713-8). The theological story can be divided according to God's activity in the past, the present and the future with the reference of John's own time when he wrote the book; John's own time (present), his past (protological) and his future (eschatological).

#### **5.4.1. The Past Activity of God**

God's past activity can be divided into three period: the acts at or before the creation of the world (protological acts), the acts of historical Jesus, and between two periods.

Only a few verses refer to God's past activity:

(a) References to protological past acts: God is "who was" (1:4,17; 16:5; 22:13), "the Alpha" (1:8; 21:6; 22:13), "the first" (1:17; 2:8), "beginning" (21:6; 22:13) etc.; in particular, Jesus' activity is indicated by "the beginning of God's creation" (3:14), he was "slain from the creation of the world" (13:8).

(b) Reference to the historical Jesus' acts: his birth (21:1-5), his apostle (21:14)<sup>31</sup>, his death on the cross (1:5; 5:6; 12:7-12).

(c) Reference to between two above periods, the Israelite period before Christ: "the song of Moses" (15:3).

##### **(a) Protological Acts**

God's story begins at or before the creation, but it has little content.

There is no detail on God's activity in protological past in spite of such references mentioned above: all of them imply God's creation and Christ's preexistence but there is no further content on how or Christ's role in creation. In particular, the last one ("the slain Lamb) shows the leading idea of John's theological narrative which repeatedly occurred throughout the whole book: 5:6, 12; 7:14; 14:4; 15:3; 17:4; 19:9; 21:23. This indicates God's nature: God the creator who want to restore his creature; God the

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<sup>31</sup> The reference in 2:2 is not to Jesus' twelve disciples, but to travelling missionaries of John's own time.

almighty who rules the whole world; God the loving who leads history through His sacrificial love to his people

(b) God's acts of the historical past

The earthly activity of Jesus except his sacrificial death appears little in this narrative. In his theological narrative, John seems to have little interest in stories connected with Jesus' birth, apostles, ministry or teaching although there are only a few alluding references to them. All his interest is focused on the death of the historical Jesus, which receives its theological significance as a center of the narrative line that stretches from creation to the end of world.

(c) God's activity during Israelite period

The Apocalypse doesn't reflect any speculation on God's role during Israelite period from the creation before the advent of Jesus,<sup>32</sup> except the mentioning of "Moses' song" (15:3).

The death of Jesus as the leading idea of the narrative:

Above all, his death plays the role of a leading factor to motivate, activate and effect the story. He is introduced to have been "slain from the creation of the world" (13:8). He was killed on the cross by the Romans but his blood became a power to deliver his people from their sins (1:5; 5:6; 12:7-12). His blood is still an effective power in his people overcoming the evil powers (12:11). In the eschatological war against the evil powers, he fights wearing a robe dipped in blood (19:11-16). The throne of God and of "the Lamb" will be in the New Jerusalem (22:1,3) so that his servants shall worship them and they shall reign for ever and ever (22:5). It is the story of God's reasserting his reign over his own creation "through the death of Jesus" while a sinful, rebellious world is judged and reclaimed.

12:7-12 is about Jesus' death on cross:

The references to the devil as the serpent seem to presuppose some version of the Fall, but this is not spelled out. The casting of Satan out of heaven in 12:7-12 does not seem

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. 1Cor 10:4; 1Pet 1:11



to be a prehistory fall of angels as some commentators appear to conclude. The principle that “hearing often interprets seeing” in John’s theological narrative can be applied to Michael’s war against Satan (12:7-9).

John *sees* a heavenly battle between Michael and Satan (12:7-9) but he does not realize what the struggle is about until it is commented by a voice “... but they have conquered him *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, ...*” (12:10-11) (Resseguie 1998:7-8,35). Therefore this may refer to Jesus’ death/victory on the cross rather than to a primordial account of the fall of Satan or an eschatological battle (12:10-11). Caird (1966:154) supports this suggestion by expressing “Michael’s victory is simply the heavenly and symbolic counterpart of the earthly reality of the Cross.” Poythress (2000:137) also mentions that “we are not to think here of the fall of Satan at the time of creation, but of the defeat of Satan in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.”

#### **5.4.2. The Present Activity of God**

References to God’s present activity: the present Christ becomes the exalted ruler of the world (1:5); He shares the throne of God who is worshipped in heaven (4:2; 5:7-14); He is in charge of death (1:18); He is present in and to the churches through the Spirit - “the Spirit” says to the churches in 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22 and John “in Spirit” experiences a new vision in 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10); His blood is still effective in the present (12:11); God looks after his people and expresses his concern about them through his reproaches, praises, and promises (esp. in chapters 2 and 3).

The “present” in John’s narrative can be defined by God’s activity during the “time of the church,” from Christ’s ascension to his second coming. In John’s theological narrative, God’s present activity is primarily effected in the churches through the spirits of the prophets (22:6). God the Spirit’s witnessing activity in the church is distinguished during this period.

According to Boring (1992:716), there are more than twice as many references to God’s present activity as to His past activity; and, despite the strong eschatological orientation

of John's narrative, there are even more references to God's present activity than to His future activity. Barr (1998:31) also argues that "John tends to avoid positing a future for God so that God is said to be the One coming; such a coming will be a major motif of the story."

Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross did not mean the end of him, for God raised him up and made him to be king of kings and lord of lords (1:5, 15:3, 19:16). Sitting down with God (3:21, 5:13, 6:16, 22:3) and in midst of the throne (7:17) in heaven, Christ is now present and active in the churches through the Spirit (cf 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), especially through the activity of Christian prophets (22:6).

In this way, God's activity is still active in present. Therefore Christian should not be *just waiting*<sup>33</sup> for his second coming since Jesus' ascension but they should *actively respond* by extending God's kingdom to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8, 8:1; Mt 28:18-20) through their witnessing activity unto death (12:11).

In the meantime, the activity of God's churches confirm their identification as his people on earth: Christ's event (conquering/dying) will be theirs and thus as Christ share God's rule, so his people share Christ's rule (3:121-22). Therefore the code of conduct for the faithful should be the witnessing activity while that for the evil-doers or the wayward Christians can be represented by the repentance.

#### **5.4.3. The Future Activity of God**

References to God's future activity: God the Son is coming soon (1:7; 2:5,16,25; 3:11;16:15; 22:7,20); Nothing happens that is not allowed by God, who permits the unfolding of demonic activities which are expressed in divine passive form such as "was given" (6:2,4,8; 9:3; 13:5) or "were allowed" (9:5; 13:5); Jesus is God's agent of judgment (19:11-16) as he was the agent of God's creation and salvation; God provides his people with new dimensions of life in the New Jerusalem – the throne of God and of the Lamb is in the city (22:3-4) and the faithful will be his priest (20:6) worshipping

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<sup>33</sup> Boring (1992:717) expresses this: "Christian experience is not 'a parenthesis' between the first and second coming, but a response to Christ's call to active following of him in the present."

him, God is the temple himself (21:21), the source of the water of life (22:1) and the light (22:5) in the city but He does not play any special narrative role.

The future can be divided into the historical future and the eschatological future. But most of the future activity of God is related to the eschatological future<sup>34</sup> and not so much to the historical future. God's kingship and reign on earth will be done through Christ's judgment and salvation activity as His agent. Nevertheless Christ's activity appears minor in the actual eschatological drama, except 19:11-16 where he is described as a divine warrior, the appearance of whom in his majesty must mean the end battle and the destruction of all enemies before him (Poythress 2000:174).

But the judgment and salvation must be both faces of God's eschatological action to fulfill his reign on earth. In connection with the salvation of his people, one needs to note that the character of God is not developed or changed in that the slain Lamb, as a leading factor of the story, continues to reveal God's self-giving, sacrificial love to his people throughout the narrative. According to Boring (1992:718), "the protological and eschatological references, brief as they are, inform the reader/ hearer that God is the one met in the self-giving of the historical Jesus and the experience of the church."

God's eschatological action aims to establish his kingship "on earth as it is heaven." At the end of resolution of plot (16:17), there is a great voice from the throne proclaiming "it is done" (16:17) which indicates his judgment's completion and also his kingdom's establishment on earth, which is epitomized by the New Jerusalem "coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2). Now "the Paradise Lost" is transformed into "the Paradise Regained" through God's action, where the dwelling of God is with men like in the Garden of Eden (21:3).

Therefore, throughout John's narrative, God's intension (or in this study, I express it as God's code of conduct from the viewpoint of the narrative action) as an initiator behind all events - can be expressed as "to recover his perverted creature" or "to make all

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<sup>34</sup> According to Boring (1992:718), the eschatological events focus on to the eschatological "coming" of Christ.



things new” (21:5) or as “thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.”

#### **5.4.4. In Medias Res<sup>35</sup>**

Abrams (1999:78) refers to *in medias res* “in the middle of things” as one of the widely used epic conventions in the choice and ordering of episodes in the heroic plot: the narrative starts *in medias res*, at a critical point in the action. John’s narrative also can be said to use a narrative strategy *in medias res* by turning on the activity of the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ.

The eschatological and the protological activities of God are considered as necessary points in the structure of the narrative, but have only a little content: the Lamb has been slain from before the foundation of the world (13:8) without related narrative; God and the Lamb plays no narrative role in spite of their presence in the new Jerusalem. Like this, although John’s narrative encompasses all time from the creation to the end of the world, its action focuses on the conflict between the church and the evil powers after Jesus’ first coming until Christ’s second coming. Therefore the Apocalypse can be said to start from in the middle of story, *in medias res*. In the overall narrative line, all attention can be said to be focused on the activity of the historical Jesus (his death and resurrection) and the present activity of the exalted Christ.

### **5.5. The Macrostructure: Core Themes of the Theology**

#### **5.5.1. The Triune God’s activity**

The story bears John’s theology. The book bears out essentially, not incidentally, a narrative theology. The theological macrostructure which focuses on God’s activity provides the plot, as the structure of events, with the content, which can semantically

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<sup>35</sup> e.g., “Paradise Lost opens with the fallen angels in hell, gathering their scattered forces and determining on revenge. Not until Books V-VII does the angel Raphael narrate to Adam the events in heaven which led to this situation; while in books XI-XII, after the fall, Michael foretells to Adam future events up to Christ’s second coming. Thus Milton’s epic, although its action focuses on the temptation and fall of man, encompasses all time from the creation to the end of the world.”

connect many small narratives, irrespective of their narrative level, in a unity.

#### **5.5.1.1. God**

In the Apocalypse, the designations for God which John deliberately use are a kind of his transcendence and omnipotence: “Alpha and Omega,” “the Lord God Almighty,” “the One who is and who was and who is to come” and “the One who sits on the throne.” The readers come to know that all creatures are under control of such a God when they experience the transcendent God on his throne<sup>36</sup> through the visionary narrative. At the moment, God’s kingship is to acknowledged on earth as it is already in heaven.

From the beginning of the narrative God is sitting on his throne, from which the greeting comes to the letter-receivers, the seven churches in Asia minor (1:4); the whole chapter 4 (the heavenly setting of plot) is described centering around the throne in heaven, contrasting to Satan’s throne in Pergamun (2:12) (namely, on earth) which means Satan rules over earth; chapter 5, as a starting part of the complication of plot (5:1 – 11:19), begins with the description of the one on the throne with a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals in his right hand; each of three seven-plague-series (seal, trumpet, bowl) also start with the heavenly court where the throne is centered (5:1-14; 8:2-6; 15:1 –16:1 respectively); at the beginning of the resolution of plot (12:1 –16:21) the new born child was caught up to God and to his throne (12:5); the story ends with God and the Lamb on the throne (22:1,3) which means that the longstanding will of God, the establishment of the kingship on earth, is fulfilled.

God Almighty will defeat all his enemies on earth to establish his kingdom in this world, in other words, he will restore his creatures disordered by Satan and his followers from the unstable condition to the stable state. With the expression “...who is to come” (1:4, 8; 4:8), the presentation of God on the throne suggests that his eschatological rule over this world is anticipated. That is, his kingship will be effective on earth as it is in heaven

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<sup>36</sup> According to Du Rand (1997:69), the vision of the throne reflects the combination of cultic and political institution: in Roman times the emperors and traditional gods of Rome were both worshipped so that political loyalty is often expressed through religious worship.

(4:9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:15; 21:5). John's narrative enables the readers to judge their situation from God's transcendent point of view so that they can see that they are not in the hands of Satan and his followers but in the hands of the transcendent God.

#### **5.5.1.2. *Jesus Christ***

Jesus Christ acts in perfect concert of God's will, and they often fade into each other (Boring 1992:719). He plays a role of God's agent to complete his will to fulfill the purpose of God's creation: God's proclamation, "I make all things new" (21:5), implies His will to restore the corrupted, unstable creatures into a newly fresh, stable ones. The slain Lamb from the beginning (13:8; 5:6, 7:17) in the midst of the throne suggests God's way to establish his kingship on earth: the sacrifice of the Lamb is God's strategy to conquer and to destroy evil on earth but also to free his people from their sins and make them his kingdom and his priests.

And how can God's kingship be established on earth? To put it briefly, it is through the sacrificial death of the Lamb. This leading motive permeates John's macronarrative: the Lamb is described to have been slain from the creation of the world (13:8), the Lamb was killed by Rome (1:4, 5:6) but in turn appears as an executor of the judgment (e.g., 19:11-16) and the salvation (e.g., 14:1-20) on earth at the eschatological time. Through the slain Lamb's activity, the kingdom of the world turn into the kingdom of God (16:17) and the worship of the beast (13:4,8,12), reflecting such religious and political worship in Roman empire, will change into the worship of God.

Contrast between the throne of the beast and the throne of God disappears when the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God and his Christ (11:15, 16:17) because in God's kingdom, namely in the New Jerusalem, only God's sovereignty will abound. In other words, the throne used to be in the heavenly court (chapter 4) is in the New Jerusalem (22:1, 3). Then the throne moving in the New Jerusalem, the distance between the heavenly world and the world has been disappeared. In the new world, the faithful also reign with Him on His throne (4:21 22:5).



### 5.5.1.3. *The Spirit*

In the meantime, how is God's rule on earth experienced? In connection with this, the Spirit's role is worth mentioning because God seeks to play his sovereignty on earth through the Spirit's witnessing activity, based on the sacrificial death of the Lamb.

The faithful's witnessing activity, with the help of the Spirit, continues to declare God's victory up to Christ's second coming.<sup>37</sup> The Spirit plays a role to make the victory of God through the Lamb's slaughtering effective to the whole world. The kingdom of God from the throne emphasizes his transcendence, but which becomes immanent when the faithful acknowledge God's kingship on earth through their witness based on the sacrificial death of the Lamb. The victory of Christ's death and resurrection is to be continued by the faithful's witness and to be effective on earth, with the help of the Spirit, up to his parousia.

Jesus, who bore the ultimate testimony of laying down one's life, is *the perfect faithful witness* (1:5), in that his ultimate testimony is his death, so the two are not in any difference (cf. Barr 1998: 28).<sup>38</sup> This code of conduct for his followers, the faithful, on earth, is to witness unto death, which John emphasizes repeatedly as the story goes on.

God's reign and the Lamb's victory is realized on earth through the witness of the faithful, with the aids of the Spirit. The church's witness to the nations has become the crucial task in God's saving program (10:11) after the death of the Lamb, so that their witness requires the repentance of the world: e.g., the two witnesses' activity is used as the last means in the repentance of the nations and leads to some repentance (11:3 - 13) but others don't repent and even curse the God of heaven because of their plagues (16:9,11). Thus there are only two possible outcomes: the conversion of the nations who acknowledge God's kingship or the judgment of those unrepentant nations.

The Spirit helps the faithful to identify God's eschatological people in their prophetic

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<sup>37</sup> The *seven spirits* (4:5) represents the fullness of the witnessing Spirit.

<sup>38</sup> The two words "witness" and "martyr" in English have the cognate *μάρτυς* in Greek.

witness, and the Spirit enables them to fulfill their prophetic ministry to the world in establishing God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (Du Rand 1997:74).

### 5.5.2. The Narrative Theology of the Apocalypse

#### 5.5.2.1. Theological Story

The macrostructure can be defined as *the theological theme* John seeks to express through his work and to persuade the readers/audience to transvalue their understanding of the events occurring on earth and see from God's point of view.

The role of each person in the triune God's activity (or code of conduct) seems to be different. Nevertheless they act together in perfect harmony. First of all, God is the creator of all that exists. But his creatures devalued by Satan are to be recovered.<sup>39</sup> But it is through the judgment and salvation that the kingdom of God is established on earth. Therefore in a comprehensive sense, God's activity can be expressed "to restore his creation" or "to make all things new" (21:5), the time of which falls on when "His will is done on earth as it is in heaven." Christ came as God's agent into history and was killed to represent his faithfulness to God. His death is transvalued<sup>40</sup> as victory in the Apocalypse, "demonstrating the power of the reigning God and providing his followers with identity and power in the world" (Du Rand 1997:65). The expression "the God of the spirits of the prophets," implies the Spirit serves as an illuminator for his servants, the prophets (22:6).<sup>41</sup> Thus, through the witnessing activity of his servants, the kingdom of God is realized on earth and is getting expanded to the end of the world.

It is God who wants to establish his kingship in this world as it already exists in heaven or to restore his creatures devalued by the evil powers. His will be done through the salvation and judgment of the Lamb and the witness of the Spirit and the prophets. This

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<sup>39</sup> "Fall" is not an explicit event of the presupposed story, but the creation is assumed to be spoiled, rebellious, and in need of redemption.

<sup>40</sup> Several times, John juxtaposes contrasting images to transform or transvalue the reader's understanding of events. The term "transvaluation" is used by Barr (1984:39-50).

<sup>41</sup> In Apocalypse, the Spirit serves as an illuminator — e.g., "the Spirit" says to the churches in 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; John "in Spirit" experience a new vision in 1:10, 4:2, 17:3; 21:10.

must be the basic theological story that all the lower narrative levels imply. By the way, it is the Christ-event that is defining center in the theological story covering God's activity from creation to eschaton (Boring 1992:722).

#### **5.5.2.2. *The Cardinal Theme of John's Narrative Theology: The Slain Lamb***

##### **5.5.2.2.1. God in control**

John often uses the *divine passive* to represent that his narrative is governed by the theological viewpoint that "events in history do not occur by chance but are determined by God's eternal plan" (Resseguie 1998:47). The passive voice appears when John emphasizes that God is in control of events in history, whether good or evil and whether on earth or in heaven. Nothing takes place that is not allowed by God, and by no means do the evil forces operate independently from God's overall plan. The following examples demonstrate that no demonic activity happens without divine sanction (:38): for example, the first horseman "*was given*" a crown (6:2); the second "was permitted to take peace from the earth" and he "*was given* a great sword" (6:4); the fourth "*were given* power over a fourth of the earth" (6:8); The locusts "*were given* power like the power of scorpions of the earth" (9:3) and "they *were told* not to harm the grass of the earth" (9:4). They "*were allowed* to torture them for five months" (9:5); The four angels "*were released* who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of mankind" (9:15); the beast "*was given* a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it *is allowed* to exercise authority for forty-two months" (13:5); after thousand years Satan "*must be loosed* for a little while" (20:3) and so on.

##### **5.5.2.2.2. God's Reign through the Slain Lamb**

Such sovereignty of God, however, will be done based on Christ's self-giving and self-negation on the Cross. John's theological viewpoint lies beneath the surface of the narrative. His death is transvalued as victory in the Apocalypse, "demonstrating the power of the reigning God and providing his followers with identity and power in the world" (Du Rand 1997:65). In chapter 5, the Lamb slain replaces the Lion, a traditional



symbol of messianic expectation. By this deformation, John shows that victory occurs through the sacrifice of a slain Lamb – through Christ’s self-giving and self-negation. Barr (1984:41) summarizes it as follows, “Jesus conquered through suffering and weakness rather than by might.”

#### **5.5.2.2.3. God’s Reign through μάρτυς**

John introduces Jesus as “the faithful witness” for God’s truth, resulting in the ultimate witness of laying down one’s life (1:5). Therefore his ultimate testimony is expressed by his death, the two are not in any real contradiction. The two words “witness” and “martyr” in English have the cognate μάρτυς in Greek, which no word seems to be better than this double meaning word to express his theological idea. In John’s theological narrative, the term “witness” is presented as the code of conduct for the faithful to follow on earth unto death.

The event of death/witness in turn is transformed into Christ’s victory, his conquest (νικάω) (12:11). The death of the historical Jesus at the hands of the Romans is coordinated with the conquering Christ who conquers historical and cosmic enemies. The story of the Christ who conquered/died is to become the story of the Christian who is called to die/conquer (Boring 1992:716). The once-for-all aorist “ἐνίκησα” of Christ (e.g., 3:21 and 5:5) leads to the repeated experience of his followers in the present expressed by the present participle “ὁ νικῶν” (e.g., 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12, 21). Barr (2000a) argues that John is never far from his conviction that God’s will prevails through faithful witness/death rather than through the wielding of power.

Caird (1966:19-20) expresses that Christ reigns from the Cross:

“Ordeal and Sovereignty are obverse and reverse of the one calling; for those who endure with Christ also reign with him, and reign in the very midst of their ordeal.”

John expresses his deep theological idea using the self-contradicting concept of Jesus Christ, the slain Lamb and the divine warrior, in his narrative. How can the Lamb

(chapter 5) turn to be the Warrior (chapter 19)? In chapter 5, when a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” it seems to be a impossible task because no one in any of the three worlds (heaven, earth, or underworld) is worthy. Because of that, John weeps much but hear one of the elders declaring that the Lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy. This Lion figure is characteristic of power, majesty and lord. But John saw the slain Lamb characteristic of weakness, obedience, and servant. John subverts Jesus’ character in a moment.

#### 5.5.2.2.4. God’s Weapon against Evil Powers

It is worthy noting Barr’s warning (2000a:8) against a one-sided interpretation:

Either story taken by itself is disastrous. Were we to have only the Lamb story, we might be tempted to accept suffering and oppression and leave all injustice in the hands of God. Were we to have only the warrior story, we might be tempted to the exercise of violence. John’s portrayal of Jesus-as-victim and Jesus-as-victor are both inadequate until the two images permeate each other. The only power that can finally overcome evil is the *sword* that comes from his mouth, which John repeatedly defines as *the word of God and the testimony of Jesus* [my italics]. This testimony is, first and foremost, Jesus’ life and death, but it is also the story of that life and death.

The subversion strategy seems to be used to reveal the “real” meaning of Jesus, his main theological idea, which John wants to deliver to the readers/ the audience of his narrative. John convicts that God’s kingdom on earth prevails through faithful witness rather than through the exercise of power. Even when the heavenly warrior is portrayed in 19:11-16, he uses “the sword of his mouth” against his enemies (19:21).

When Christ’s power turns out to be based on *the testimony/death of Jesus himself*, the audience realize that the self-contradicting feature of Jesus Christ reveal the real identity of Jesus Christ, who *reign from the cross*. When the faithful also conquer their evil enemy with *the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony*, they will become His real followers. This may be the most leading idea of John’s theological narrative.

### 5.5.2.3. *The Codes of Conduct of the Main Characters*

The main characters in the Apocalypse consist of God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, the faithful, the evil-doer, the wayward. We can find each of them has his unique mode of activity. Let me put it briefly, God the Father acts “to restore his creature” as we see from God’s proclamation, “*I make all things new*” (21:5), God the Son acts to complete God’s will through *the judgment and salvation*, God the Spirit *help the faithful to witness God’s sovereignty to the world*. The faithful continue to establish the kingdom of God on earth through *their witness activity* to the end of the world. On the other hand, the evil-doer or the wayward should *repent* because the time is near.

Therefore, the real identity of the book can be estimated as a Johannine version of gospel. The book is written for readers of all the ages as well as the first readers as it presents the Lord’s truth in a fresh, effective and dramatic way.<sup>42</sup> The form is an apocalyptic narrative but the content obviously turns on Jesus’ story for salvation and judgment in the past, in the present and in the future.

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<sup>42</sup> In connection with this, Bowman’s comment is noteworthy that “it should not surprise us overmuch to discover that the NT scriptures have developed three new literary creations – the gospel, the letter, and the apocalypse – to serve as vehicles of the gospel message” (1955: 439). Additionally, the book does contain an occasional enigma (μυστήριον -1:20; 10:7; 17:5,7) as Paul, particularly, fancied referring to the gospel message as a μυστήριον (Rom 11:25; 16:15; 1 Cor 2:1,7; 4:1; 15:51; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3) (:436).



# Chapter Six: Narrative Function of the Apocalypse

## 6.1. General

The content of his message is, in fact, the purpose declared by God. Here, “word” (1:2) is a quite inadequate rendering of the Greek “λόγος” God never speaks simply to convey information, but always to achieve results (cf. Caird 1966:11).<sup>1</sup>

Baldick (1990:125) also points out that while the Greek word “λόγος” can just mean “word,” in philosophy it often denotes an ultimate principle of truth or reason and in Christian theology it refers to the Word of God as the origin and foundation of all things.

This chapter deals with the transforming power of John’s narrative. While chapter 4 is related to a schematic structure (form) of John’s narrative and chapter 5 is related to its semantic structure (content), this chapter can be said to correspond to the pragmatic aspect (function) of the structure of the Apocalypse.

What is more, if chapter 5 can be said to be concerned with *God’s* or *the implied author’s intention* (narrative theology), chapter 6 would be related with the *audience’s response* (narrative rhetoric).

Apocalyptic stories generally are designed to shape the imagination of the hearer, to allow one to view one’s historical situation differently and to act in a new way. Apocalyptic narratives, being revelatory in a basic sense, lead us to see the world anew by reversing our expectations. The Apocalypse also serves to alter the audience’s perception of the world — to transform them from victims of Roman oppression, for example, into victors over the ultimate evil-forces.

How does this happen? We will approach the transforming power of the Apocalypse in two contexts: the literary context (6.1.) and the socio-historical context (6.2.). We will primarily rely on Patte’s (1990) and a narrative homilist Lowry’s (1980) theories for the

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<sup>1</sup> “He spoke and it happened; he commanded and it came into being” (Ps. 33:9). “My word shall not return to me empty-handed, but shall accomplish what I purpose and succeed in the task I sent it to do” (Isa. 55:11).

former, and also on Fiorenza's (1985), Collins' (1984), Gager's (1975), and Barr's models (2000a) and a behavioral scientist Lewin's theory (1961) for the latter:

The first part (6.2.) deals with a narrative strategy to persuade the audience - "reversal" - which is related to the aim of John's narrative to transform the listeners' improper or problematic view of a theme into a proper view of that theme. Insofar as it tries to persuade the audience, John's narrative can be called rhetoric.<sup>2</sup>

The latter part (6.3.) deals with the transforming power of John's narrative when it is used in the external context – that is, in both the liturgical context and the socio-political context. In particular, the *boundary-crossing* theory at the *liminal state* which an anthropologist Van Gennep (1960) suggests will be highlighted in order to reveal its power in the external context.

And finally, the diagram for the transforming power of John's narrative in literary and external context will be illustrated as a result at the end of this chapter (6.4).

## **6.2. Narrative Strategy effecting Transformation, in the Literary Context**

Reversal which happens at the beginning and at the end of the story is an important narrative strategy (Abrams 1999:227),<sup>3</sup> through which John leads the audience to have a different viewpoint of their historical situation. Patte (1990a:14-15) points out that in narrative, the inverted parallelisms are found easily in the way that a theme which is problematic at the introduction is changed to a resolved issue at the end of the story.

The reversal strategy seems to be well fitted to the Apocalypse because John tries to persuade the audience/readers through the visionary-world story where they are

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<sup>2</sup> According to Aristotle (1967:1.2.1355b), rhetoric is defined by as the faculty of discovering the available means of persuasion, and by Quintilian (1920-22:2.15.38) as *scientia bene dicendi*, the knowledge of how to speak well.

<sup>3</sup> According to Abrams (1999:227), "In many plots the denouement (unknot) involves a reversal in the protagonist's fortunes, whether to the protagonist's failure or destruction, as in tragedy, or success, as in

revealed as victors, different from their real situation where they are dominated by evil forces.

### **6.2.1. Reversal at Beginning and End of John's Narrative**

The principle of reversal can be clearly demonstrated in Plato's famous allegory of the prisoners in a cave. The prisoners are chained together so that they can see only the back wall of the cave. A fire behind them and moving figures make flickering shadows on the wall. They believe the shadows are reality. However, if the prisoners are led out of the cave into the sunlit brightness of noonday, they find truth to be a radical reversal. Similarly, reversal occurs in the Apocalypse when the audience reach the end of John's narrative and come to face the truth lying behind all status quo dominating them.

Firstly, what does John try to reverse?

The theme is stated as either a problem or a question in the introduction. The author appears concerned with this problem but has actually chosen to use it as an issue of interest to the envisioned reader whose knowledge must now be revised (Patte 1990a:14).

There is no doubt that the theme of John's narrative is closely related to the historical situation/exigency of his readers/audience. In particular, 1:9 implies their historical situation ("the tribulation") and reveals that John is sharing this experience with them. Hence his concern about this matter which prompts him, as a leader of the contemporary Christians, to write to them.

I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9).

But this related historical-situation is not as simple as might be thought because of

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comic plots."



different opinions among scholars. Thus, to identify what situation the audience/readers of the Apocalypse were in, it is necessary to refer to different analyses.

#### Social Setting: Historical-rhetorical Situation:

There is no single interpretation that fully explains the Apocalypse; therefore we should use a multi-faceted approach to try and uncover as much as is exegetically possible (Du Rand 1991:287). The Apocalypse as a whole is a poetic-rhetorical construction of a symbolic world based on its own historical-rhetorical situation. Moreover, for the most part, the Apocalypse as a visionary narrative creates a rhetorical symbolic world in its own right. In the meanwhile, the martyrs will be exalted, while the evil being will be judged.

In this study, the function and effect which the rhetorical symbolic world of the book affords to the readers, who suffer from their particular rhetorical historical situation, will be emphasized. Special emphasis will be placed on the aspects of their psychological, sociological and, more importantly, theological experience.

Most scholars agree that the latter part of Domitian's reign is the most likely social context for the Apocalypse. However the book itself is not sufficiently explicit about time and date to establish a specific social, historical context.

As a way of recognizing and including those subjective factors of background, temperament, and theological perspective, Collins (1984:106) introduces the terms "*perceived crisis*" and "*relative deprivation*." The term *perceived crisis* makes it possible to connect apocalypses to social crises, while recognizing that no *evident* social crises are necessarily present. So she writes that the Apocalypse "was indeed written in response to crisis, but one that resulted from the clash between the expectations of John and like-minded Christians and the social reality within which they had to live." *Relative deprivation* refers to any situation where there is "marked disparity between expectations and their satisfaction." In John's case, *relative deprivation* occurs because of the "conflict between the Christian faith itself, as John understood it, and the social situation as he perceived it." Faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the belief that the

kingdom of God had been established cause new expectations. It results in the tension between John's vision of the kingdom of God and his environment that moved him to write his apocalypse.

Fiorenza (1991), however, thinks that Collins' position "Domitian was neither better nor worse than other Roman emperors" can not justify the idea that the Book is not seen as a response to an actual socio-theological crisis: It only suggests that the author's interpretation was not shared by all Christians in Asia Minor. One's interpretation depends on *how* one perceives a particular situation of crisis, but also on the social location and conscious stance from *where* one looks at such a situation. "The same actual historical situation is experienced and interpreted quite differently depending on the analysis and stance taken by the interpreter" (:126).

Secondly, how does the reversal take place in John's narrative? The reversal, according to Patte (1990a:14), can be accomplished through the inverted parallelism:

Consequently, through the description of the solution to the problem, the conclusion proposes a new knowledge to the reader, which is nothing else than the author's view of the issue. Thus the goal of the discourse is to transform the reader's old knowledge (an improper or problematic view of a theme, formulated in the introduction) into a new knowledge (a proper view of that theme, presented in the conclusion).

Therefore the reversal strategy can be presented in an *inverted parallelism* between the introduction and the conclusion of the narrative on plot. As Patte (1990a:14) explains, "there is parallelism because both deal with the same theme; this parallelism is inverted because the introduction as problematic, while the conclusion presents it as a resolved issue."

If an author aims to transform the worldview, feeling, or general convictions of the readers, instead of transforming their knowledge about a specific issue, the narrative needs to be figurative (:14-5). In a narrative case, characters and situations play the role of figures. Adding to that, the usage of figurative language such as metaphor and

symbol is distinguished in the Apocalypse case. The symbolic-poetical work would be a powerful means for persuading the readers/audience - especially when the audience experiences the sense of fracture and abrasion between what happens now and what is promised, and where figurative language as well as characters and situations may play a role in creating the rhetorical-visionary world to persuade the reader/audience.

A comparison of the beginning and end of this Apocalypse would allow us to identify inverted parallelisms between them: the situation presented in the introduction is transformed by the time one reaches the conclusion. It is in the introduction of John's narrative (esp. 1:9 - 3:21) that we find John's contemporary churches' as well as John's suffering experience from within and without. But when we reach the conclusion of the narrative (esp., 17:1 - 22:5), we find the situation between the Lamb's followers and Satan's followers (the evildoers) totally reversed: in those days, the Christians were excluded from Jewish and Greek institutions; they were dragged before the earthly court, but now they stand before the throne and before the Lamb – that is the heavenly court; they suffered from emperor worship, but now they worship the real Master; then, Jerusalem was destroyed, but now the new Jerusalem is established; formerly, they underwent persecution, Antipas was killed and John himself was exiled but now they are saved and enjoy their bliss under God's tabernacle. On the other hand, Satan and all his followers (represented by the beasts, the evil-doers, the wayward, the false prophets) are judged at the end of the narrative, although they seem to rule over Christians on earth at the beginning of the narrative. "The New Jerusalem" would be an epitomized symbol of the promise fulfilled by Jesus (chs 21-22). These cause a rhetorical effect: it is expected that the readers/audience throughout John's narrative will be persuaded to revert (or change or correct) their attitude or ideas towards the present dominant evil powers and also to recover/encourage/strengthen their faith or their identity as Christians.

### **6.2.2. Reversal Process in John's Narrative**

In the meanwhile, for this reversal, what happens in the text between the beginning and



the conclusion of the narrative?<sup>4</sup> According to Lowry’s theory (1980), the reversal of the Apocalypse takes place as follows:

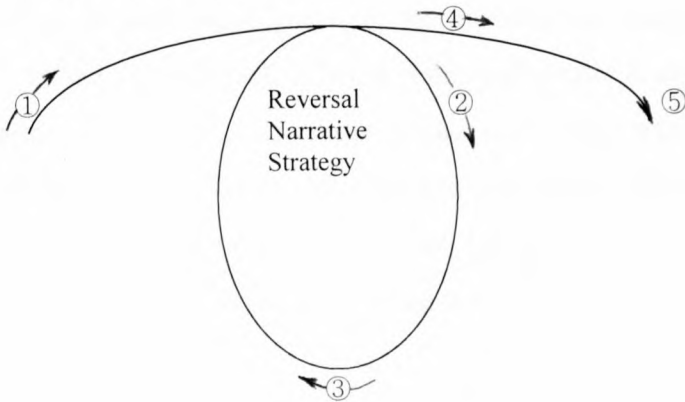


Fig. 14

Firstly (①), the introduction of the Apocalypse is to upset the equilibrium of the listeners in such a way as to engage them in the narrative theme. We can assume that most of audience/readers are in a neutral state mentally, as the experience begins, even if some appear eager to be engaged, others reluctant. John draws them into a world of his own making.

There is always an important discrepancy, exigency or problem which is the issue.<sup>5</sup> These are found especially in the letter-series vision which corresponds to the setting or situation of the plot of the Apocalypse.<sup>6</sup> Generally, the context itself is “a supercharged one which provides so great *an exigency* [italics mine] that it becomes unnecessary to worry oneself with cultivation” (cf. Lowry 1980:78).

Secondly (②), through the process, John moves from the initial upsetting of the equilibrium to the complication of the plot (5:1-11:19) - ever increasing the felt tension of discrepancy. However, something is “up in the air” – an issue not solved (6:9-11). Suspense, one of the narrative strategies, plays an important role in this phase. One cannot breathe easily until some solution occurs. The ongoing suspense/uncertainty

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Lowry (1980) for this reversal strategy, even if he applies it in the context of *the homiletical plot: the sermon as narrative art form*. Actually, the Apocalypse can be thought of as a sermon in the worshipping context of a congregation.  
<sup>5</sup> The central task of any narrative is the resolution of that discrepancy. The resolution of a central problem also does not mean that there are no other problems which are resolved in the course of the presented narrative (:31).

provides the existential reason for continuing to hear/read on.

As a plot unravels it arouses expectations in the audience or reader about what is to happen and how characters will react. When a concerned reader is uncertain about what is going to happen, especially to those characters with whom the reader is sympathetically involved, he or she experiences suspense. If what happens runs contrary to our expectations, we experience surprise. The dynamic interplay of suspense and surprise is a chief source of vitality in a traditional plot.

Thirdly (③), all problem-solving processes look for some missing link, some explanation which accounts for the problematic issue. When found, the missing link is the bridge from problem to solution. At the beginning of the resolution, Jesus is introduced as the missing link to solve the problem, the very same Jesus who the audience may have doubted/forgotten because nothing has happened since his ascension and so long a time has lapsed without the second coming he promised them. In other words, the mythical episodes about Jesus, his birth (12:1-6) and his death and ascension (12:7-12) imply that Jesus is going to appear as the way to resolve all problems. The most effective surprise is “one which turns out, in retrospect, to have been grounded in what has gone before, even though we have hitherto made the wrong inferences from the given facts of circumstance and character” (Abrams 1999:225). An example of such a misconception is that John’s audience might consider the Roman Empire as the strongest kingdom on earth and also false prophets in the church or Roman Emperors on earth as their patrons.

The human predicament moves with increasingly felt “necessity” toward some kind of release, toward the revealing of the missing link, “Jesus.” Once disclosed, matters are seen in a different light. It is not quite what one had expected, and a solution “arrives” from an unexpected source, which turns things upside down. Once the clue to resolution is articulated, the hearer is ready to receive the word. Now we are expected to discover how the eternal gospel of/about Jesus Christ (14:6) meets the human predicament.

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<sup>6</sup> A narrative has a plot devised by the author, which has as its major ingredient a sensed problem.

Fourthly (④), this phase corresponds to the evaluation of the plot of the Apocalypse (17:1 - 22:5) which contains the emotional reaction with respect to the previous narration (Van Dijk 1980:115) but also summarizes/introduces the gospel as an ultimate solution of the hitherto unsolved problem. Only the recourse to God's answer – in other words, the gospel, the good news of/about Jesus Christ<sup>7</sup> - can be the ultimate solution to human predicament. Once Jesus has been suggested as the ultimate clue to resolution, the narrative context is ripe for the experiencing of the gospel: John is ready to announce the good news, while the audience would also be prepared to accept it. The previous stages are intended to prepare the way so that the gospel is effectively proclaimed. When the gospel is proclaimed, we can expect a result, a change of viewpoint or attitude of a hearer/reader having been in a predicament, because it is “λόγος” which always achieves results (Ps. 33:9, Isa 55:11). Whatever the issue, this phase reveals a new door opened, the new possibility occasioned by the gospel. “Behold, I make all things new” (21:5).

Finally (⑤), with the gospel proclaimed, we are now ready to ask: what consequences can be anticipated as a result of this intersection of gospel and human predicament? The critical matter left for explication has to do with the future – now made new by the gospel. John asks: in the light of the gospel, what can be expected, should be done, or is now possible? It anticipates how life can now be lived. “Human response is subsequent to that experience of gospel – and consequent of it” (Lowry 1980:69). The narrated Word has brought the audience/ readers into new life by its announcement of what God has done and is doing – the good news. This means that the central issue of John's narrative is the proclamation of the good news. The anticipation of the consequences after hearing could be varied, but must be predicated on the new situation created by the gospel. The hearers are persuaded to make a new choice, perhaps never before made, such as worshipping only God instead of earthly gods. Now the possible consequences, an active response to God, can be anticipated: “Ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ” (22:20).

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<sup>7</sup> e.g., God as the judge: 18:20; 19:1-2; 19:11-15; God as King of kings: 19:16; 20:4-6; God as the Alpha and the Omega: 21:6 to mention a few.



But the transforming power of the Apocalypse does not take place only because the narrative has a reversal strategy. How it succeeds, further, in affecting the readers, is closely related to the external context of the Apocalypse of John.

### **6.3. Transforming Power of the Apocalypse in the External Context**

As we have seen, a comparison of the beginning with the end of this Apocalypse allows us to identify “reversal” or “inverted parallelism” between them, which in part serves to transform the convictions of the readers/audience. If we remember, however, that the narrative is enacted in the socio-historical context of the readers/hearers, we obtain still more insight into this process of transformation.

Clearly, as a narrative the Apocalypse has a function to transform the worldview, feeling, or general convictions of the readers. But how does this happen? To answer this question, various approaches have been introduced. Here, among others, the models of Fiorenza, Gager, Collins and Barr are referred to, each offering some insight, and each having a weak point of its own.

#### **6.3.1. The Three Types of Strategies which could bring about a Change of the Hearers/Readers**

Different approaches to the social setting of the Apocalypse have led to some of the different connections that have been made between its language and social situation. The following suggestions have been made for understanding its transformative effect, each offering some insight.

Three ways are introduced which may be able to change a hearer in a predicament such as that of John’s contemporary Christians in their socio-historical situation. The first and second methods, increasing the challenging forces and diminishing the opposing forces respectively, are suggested by Lewin (1961), while the third one is proposed by Van Gennepe (1960) and deals with the dynamics of the *liminal* state in which a person passes through a temporary experience and is permanently changed as a result.

6.3.1.1. Lewin's Two Methods

Lewin (1961:235-238), secular theorist in behavioral change, identifies two basic means of initiating change in a person or group. Describing any static state as a balance of tension on either side of the status quo, Lewin postulates that a change in equilibrium can be achieved by two means: by increasing forces in the desired direction, or by reducing opposing forces. He adds that if a change from level L1 to L2 (from the present to a new level) is brought about by increasing the forces toward L2, the secondary effects should be different from the case where the same change of level is brought about by diminishing the opposing forces.

His two ways to bring about a change can be illustrated for each case of the static state, the first way increasing the tension and the second decreasing the tension (from left to right) as follows:<sup>1</sup>

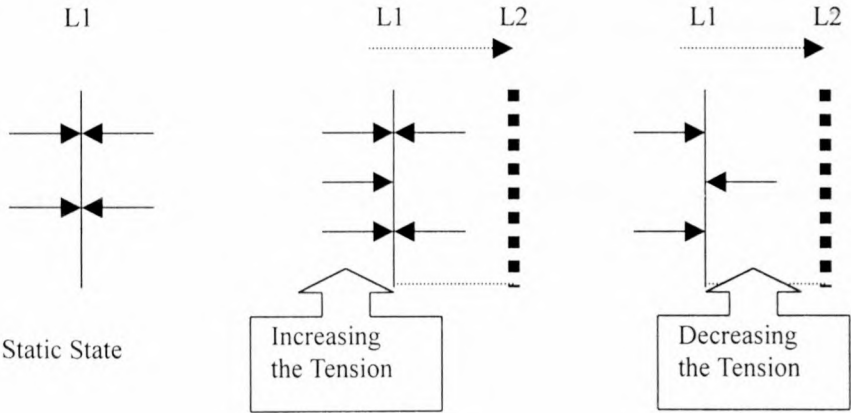


Fig. 15

While the equilibrium might change to the same new level in both cases, the secondary effect should, however, be quite different. In the first case, fairly high tension would accompany the process on the new level whereas in the second case, a state of relatively low tension would result. Lewin (1961:236) warns that in the first case, increase of tension above a certain degree could lead to higher aggressiveness, higher emotionality, and lower constructiveness. Fiorenza's (1985) and Collins' (1984) approaches may accord with his first way (increasing forces in the desired direction), while Gager's (1975) may parallel the second case (reducing opposing forces).

### 6.3.1.2. *Van Gennep's Method*

While Lewin's two methods can be said to modulate the tension between the status quo and a new (desired) level, that is, to change the "*understanding*" of one's socio-historical situation, Van Gennep's theory (1960) concerns an attempt to transform the individual, that is, "*his/her essential self*" like the change of one's identity in an initiation.

Van Gennep holds that "all ceremonial patterns accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another." Because of the importance of these transitions, he refers to them as *rites of passage*, a complete scheme of which theoretically includes *rites of separation*, *rites of transition*, and *rites of incorporation* (1960:10-13).<sup>8</sup> For example, adolescence forms a *liminal* period between childhood and adulthood, but the passage from childhood to adulthood involves a special series of rites of separation, a transition, and an incorporation into adulthood.

### 6.3.2. Approaches based on Lewin's First method (to Transform the Hearers by Increasing the Challenging Forces)

#### 6.3.2.1. *Fiorenza's Approach (1985)*

Fiorenza states that the symbolic language of the Apocalypse, as poetic language, evokes rather than defines meanings, so that "it becomes necessary for interpreters to acknowledge the ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy of all literature" (1985:186).

She (:181-199) suggests two criteria to interpret the Apocalypse: (1) it must make "sense" in terms of the overall structure of the book (:187), and (2) it must "fit" the historical-rhetorical situation to which it is a response (:183). In other words, arguing

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<sup>8</sup> They correspond to *preliminal* rites, *liminal* rites and *postliminal* rites respectively. On the other hand, rites of separation predominate at funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages and transition rites in initiation (:11).



that there is a difference between fictional literature and historical writings, Fiorenza suggests that the Apocalypse should perhaps be read as poetry, but the result of literary analysis of the text should be complemented by socio-historical analysis, which she refers to as historical-rhetorical analysis. In her words, “one must not only analyze the literary patterns and structure of a writing, but also their relation to its theological perspective and historical setting” (:159). Put in another way, we are never able to read a text without explicitly or implicitly reconstructing its historical subtext within the process of our reading (:183). For her, the historical situation (of tribulation and persecution) under Domitian is essential for grasping the rhetorical function of the book as one that strengthens endurance (:114), in spite of the general agreement among scholars that there was no clear general persecution under Domitian, who was neither better nor worse than other Roman emperors. Fiorenza (1985:181-199) argues that John tries to mobilize, persuade, and provoke Christian to stake their lives on the Lamb’s followers. In this sense, Fiorenza’s suggestion corresponds to Lewin’s first strategy to make a change by increasing the tension (1961:235-8).

The Apocalypse as a symbolic-poetic work is rhetorically used to let the hearers/readers imaginatively participate in the symbolic world created in the text: “The strength of persuasion for action lies not in the theological reasoning or historical argument of the Apocalypse, but in the ‘evocative’ power of its symbols as well as in its hortatory, imaginative, emotional language, and dramatic movement” (:187). In this way, the hearers’/readers’ reactions, emotions, convictions, and identifications are evoked.

#### **6.3.2.2. Collins’ Approach (1984)**

Collins, in contrast to Gager and Fiorenza, does not view the Apocalypse as a response to political oppression or persecution.<sup>9</sup> Factors such as personal background, temperament, and theological perspective “are at least as important as aspects of the

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<sup>9</sup>According to Collins (1984:84-99), there are elements of crisis in the social environment of Christians in Asia Minor at the end of Domitian’s reign that are probably reflected in the Apocalypse – conflict with the Jews, mutual antipathy toward neighbouring gentiles, conflict over wealth both within the society of Asia Minor and between Rome and the eastern empire, and the somewhat precarious relations between Christian organizations and Roman officials.

socio-historical situation” (1984:105).

The task of the Apocalypse was to overcome the unbearable tension perceived by the author between what was and what ought to have been. His purpose according to Collins, was to create that tension for readers unaware of it, to heighten it for those who felt it already, and then to overcome it in an act of literary imagination (:141-60), all of which corresponds to Lewin’s first strategy to make a change by increasing the tension (1961:235-238).

The Apocalypse produces a catharsis not only via individual symbolic narratives but also by the structure of the book as a whole (Collins 1984:154). Feelings of fear and resentment are released by the repeated destruction of the faithful’s enemies.

For Collins the expressive language of the Apocalypse deals with the crisis of faith by providing a catharsis for its readers. Just as in the Greek tragedy where, with the help of language and symbols, certain emotions are aroused which then have to be purified by a literary catharsis, so the fears (for Rome) and grievances (about their situation) of the first readers of the Apocalypse are also rhetorically purified. Hearers of the Apocalypse are cleansed of fear and resentment in part simply by the intensification and “objective expression” of those emotions in the motifs of conflict, oppression, destruction, judgment, and salvation in the Apocalypse: “The feelings are thus brought to consciousness and become less threatening” (:153). The projection of tension, by transferring it to God or by withdrawing themselves, creates the necessary distance so that the readers are able to experience greater control of their desperate circumstances. By projecting the perceived conflict with its accompanying emotions onto a larger cosmic screen (that of God and Satan, for example), the Apocalypse clarifies and objectifies negative feelings and displaces them upon Jesus or God (1984:153,161). Finally, Christians are called on to turn their emotions of resentment and aggression back upon themselves so as to create higher moral constraint, for example, sexual abstinence, poverty, more intense isolation from the social order, or even martyrdom (:157). For Asian Christians the Apocalypse offered an escape from reality by enabling them to experience the present as a time when religious hopes were realized. In such

ways the symbolic world of the Apocalypse affected the behavior and action of Christians in Asia Minor. It does so, however, through “an act of creative imagination” (:155). “What ought to be was experienced as a present reality by the hearers in the linguistic and imaginative event of hearing the book read” (:154).

### **6.3.3. Approach based on Lewin’s Second Way (to Transform the Hearers by Diminishing the Opposing Forces)**

#### ***6.3.3.1. Gager’s Approach (1975)***

Gager attempts to apply a structuralist understanding and analysis of myth to the composition of the Apocalypse. He maintains that the binary structure of myth is decisive in determining the structure or meaning of the book, in that it creates a machine for transcending time (:52). He states that the sections and patterns of the Apocalypse are all pressed into the binary structure of victory/hope and oppression/despair.

Gager also interprets the Apocalypse as a response to oppression and, more specifically, to persecution and martyrdom, and as a work that functions to console its readers and hearers (:50). This interpretation thus corresponds to Lewin’s second way of effecting a change, namely, by decreasing the tension. The language and symbols of myth serve the purpose of softening the experience of conflict.

Firstly, the text oscillates between symbols of victory/hope and oppression/despair so that the reader gradually assumes that oppression and despair are penultimate.<sup>10</sup> The oscillation from oppression to victory serves to undermine any tendency among the audience to treat the conflicts in their experience as “permanent, unbearable contradictions” (:54).

Secondly, as myth, the Apocalypse’s structure serves to suppress time. Through “mythic

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<sup>10</sup> For example of the oscillation, the opening of the sixth seal (oppression/despair) is followed not by the seventh seal, but rather by a vision of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who bear the seal of God (victory/hope) (:54).



narrative” the faithful readers and hearers experience future bliss in the present moment (:50). Thus he argues that hearing or reading the Apocalypse becomes a form of therapy, “much like the technique of psychoanalysis, whose ultimate goal is to transcend the time between a real present and a mythical future” (:51). Drawing heavily from Levi-Strauss, Gager continues to say that, like the process of psychoanalysis, apocalyptic myths “manipulate symbols” so as to change the reality of the patient/reader (:51). However, the suppression of time seems to be only illusory, because such a mythic enactment might not finally change the reality of Christian existence.

#### **6.3.4. Approach based on Van Gennep’s Model (to transform the Hearers Themselves through a Liturgy)**

##### **6.3.4.1. Barr’s Approach (1998)**

Barr (1998:179-180) postulates the Apocalypse as a liturgical text on the context of John’s first century Christian congregation:

If writers try to interpret the imaginative experience as merely a denial of reality<sup>11</sup> or as a temporary, ephemeral event soon to be eclipsed by life in the real world,<sup>12</sup> they fail to appreciate the transformative function of the narrative. One passing through this rite, can be permanently altered.

Most scholars suppose that the Apocalypse must have been planned to be performed, as an oral recital of a story, in the liturgical context of Christian worship. Then we need to ask how such a narrative in such a context might influence the participants who hear it.

We need to try to imagine the power of this story, recited in the lamp-lit darkness as Christians gather to worship God, give thanks, and celebrate the Eucharist (Barr 1998:180).

The primary setting for this story is a gathering of people at which someone reads

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<sup>11</sup> e.g., Collins’s model (1984:155)

<sup>12</sup> e.g., Gager’s model (1975:56)

John's narrative aloud, as a letter from John (1:3-4). And the Apocalypse claims to have been originally received in worship day, "on the Lord's day" (1:10). This at least is the implied setting of the implied audience, while in content, the apocalypse can be used as an elaborate story for the rite of Eucharist (:171). Thompson (1990:69-73) carefully holds that the language of the Apocalypse is that of worship.

Barr (1998:179) suggests that there are two kinds of rituals: Some rituals serve to celebrate the world as it is and maintain the status quo – for example, various rites related to the emperor justify Roman rule; other rituals serve to transform the world and one's identity. Weddings and initiation rites would be examples of such rites.

Barr applies Van Gennep's theory (1960) that the boundary-crossing experience takes place in a *liminal* state, in order to interpret the transforming power of the Apocalypse. Hearing John's narrative in the context of worship may correspond to his second type of ritual in that it allows the readers/hearers to move from one stage to another. In the meanwhile, they experience a transitional stage, a time when the participants can be changed into a new state. It is analogous to a boundary crossing from childhood to adulthood through a puberty ritual.

Hearing the book as liturgical material in the context of worship is like experiencing a series of rituals comprising rites of "separation from outside," "transition during participation in a worship" and "incorporation into the community (or the Lamb's followers)." The dynamics of this *liminal* state permit a person to pass through a temporary experience and to be permanently changed as a result.

## 6.4. Summary

We have seen how the Apocalypse, as a rhetorical-symbolic narrative, functions to affect (console or persuade or transform) the readers/hearers in various ways. The narrative reflects the socio-political conflict of the world in which the worship of worldly gods was coerced. In particular, in John's contemporary society, the Christian identity is always vulnerable. Therefore John, through the Apocalypse, seems to

illuminate the real identity behind their surroundings and to “transform them into a community of a shared vision of the struggle between Roman culture and Christian conviction” (Barr 1998:180). John, thus, tries to persuade his fellow-Christians to resist the anti-divine world, to keep God’s word, to worship only God and to remain faithful witnesses in the world.

1. In the most basic sense, an apocalypse is a story that removes the veil from ordinary reality and reveals what is truly happening. John’s narrative aims to communicate to the hearers/readers his theological convictions about true “reality” behind all the events in their evil world, and to enable them to act in new ways. All analyses of its function should be upon a construction of faith that the evil forces are to be conquered and the oppressed are to be victors on the ground of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How much such a story can affect or transform its readers is in question. However, there is no doubt that it functioned to transform the imaginations of its first audience.

2. Patte’s and Lowry’s study bears out that John’s narrative makes use of “reversal strategy” to transform or reverse the readers/ hearers, which is done in the literary context. The reversal is found in the way that a theme, problematic at the introduction, is changed to resolved issue at the end of the story. But for the further study of various ways in which the external elements affect the hearers/readers in order to change (or persuade or transform) them, it is necessary to consider the external context where John’s narrative is used.

3. Fiorenza and Gager agree that the Apocalypse arouses a response to the felt contradiction between faith and experience, but they disagree on how the Apocalypse responds to the conflict between religious belief and social experience. For Gager, the Apocalypse takes the Christian temporarily into a world of millennial bliss; symbolic manipulation cannot change those hard realities and just functions as a brief reprieve from the hard political realities. For Fiorenza, the Apocalypse mobilizes, persuades, and provokes Christians to stake their lives on the Lamb’s followers. However, Gager’s notion of mythic suppression of time is doubtful. Collins’ approach based on the “perceived crisis” or “relative deprivation” contrasts with that of Fiorenza, which



requires a “historical-rhetorical situation” that is not just a product of the mind and psyche of author. Collins shares with Fiorenza and Gager the assumption that disparities between religious belief and social, political experience create the crisis to which the Apocalypse is a response. Collins, however, offers a solution similar to Gager’s in that both resolve the religious crisis of faith in a temporary imaginative experience that does not affect the hard social and political realities of Asian life.

4. Despite its own weakness, each approach offers a contribution toward revealing the effect of John’s narrative on the readers/hearers

(1) Fiorenza’s approach, by means of a visionary rhetoric in a social-political situation, emphasizes the social function insofar as the hearers/readers are motivated to strengthen their identity and remain the Lamb’s followers, while being called to consistent resistance or endurance (1991: 119).

(2) Collins’ approach focuses on the psychological effect of the hearers’/readers’ fears and grievances which are rhetorically purified – that is, like in the Greek tragedy, the Apocalypse functions to produce an emotional catharsis in its hearers with the help of language (1984:141-60).

(3) Gager’s approach suggests the possibility that apocalyptic myths “manipulate symbols” so as to change the reality of the reader - hearing myth one enters again into the ideal time and so adjusts one’s life to the world as it is meant to be (1975:49-57).<sup>13</sup>

(4) Barr’s approach is about the transformation of a person or group in a liturgical context. Hearing the narrative in the liturgical context is like experiencing a ritual, so that its enactment functions to bind the hearers into a Christian community of shared vision (1998:175-180).<sup>14</sup>

5. With the various insights into the function of John’s narrative, when the Apocalypse as liturgical material with literary-reversal strategy is used in a liturgical context, it has effective power to transform the participants into the Lamb’s loyal followers, and they

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<sup>13</sup> Its process is like the process of psychoanalysis. Levi-Strauss shows a marvelous example of this power of myth in “The Song of the Cuna Shaman” (1967:181-202).

<sup>14</sup> According to Barr (1998), community creation may be one of the most fundamental functions of stories: “To share a story is already to share a sense of community” (:177). Even if before the story there were many different groups, after the story there is one: “The story creates the community” (:178).

will be his witnesses to the end of the earth (12:11 cf. Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Their witness will transform the world and be the way to establish the kingdom of God on earth. This can be diagrammed as follows:

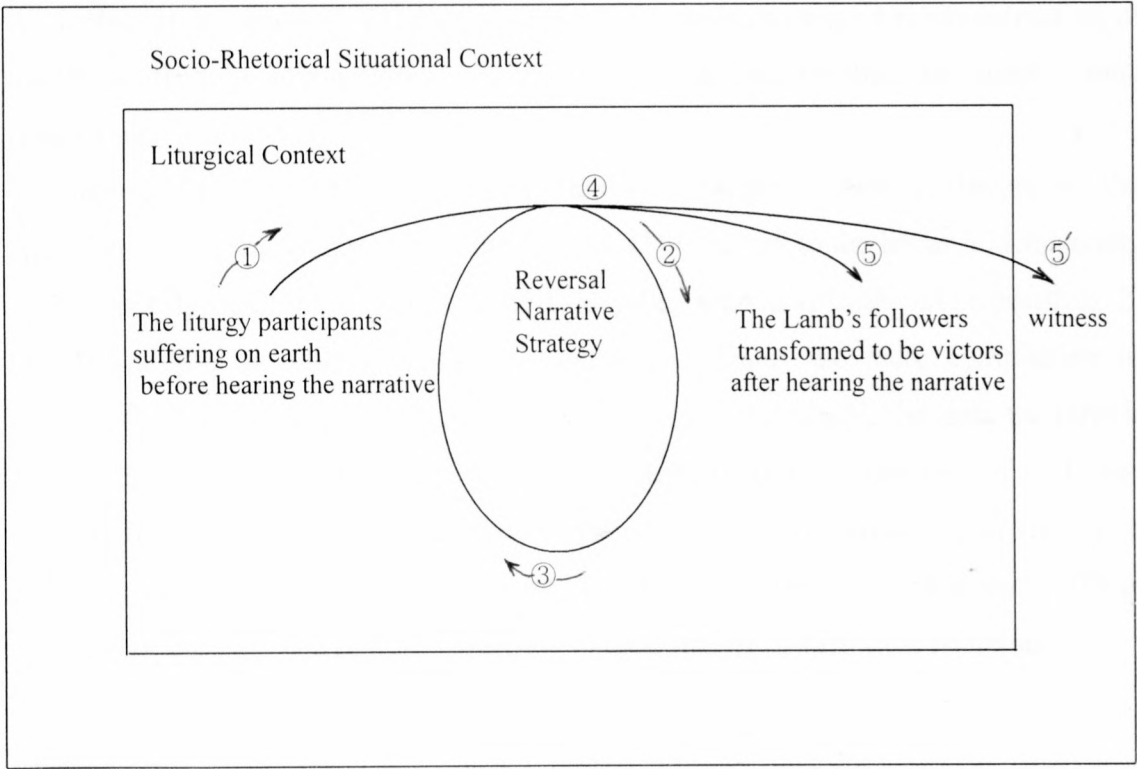


Fig.16

## Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusion

### Chapter One

A number of interpreters of the Apocalypse have tended to regard the construction of the book from a chronological perspective which has resulted in many wrong conclusions.

To oppose this kind of interpretation, this study applied narrative theory to the Apocalypse, starting with four presuppositions: (1) Contrary to the linear understanding of the Apocalypse of the modern reader, it should be seen as *episodic and repetitive*; (2) the Apocalypse as *a unified literary composition* denies the mere compilation of sources; (3) *the form and content of the Apocalypse are inseparable*, because the form is not just a container for the content but the patterning and arrangement of it. If one changes the order of a text, one changes its meaning; (4) the Apocalypse, like other scriptures, is *a rhetorical writing* that calls upon people deliberately and intentionally to change /correct their conviction/worldview in their rhetorical-historical situation.

### Chapter Two

The history of the study of the structure of the Apocalypse was briefly surveyed. The study of literary structure in the Apocalypse probably mostly depends on each interpreter's *subjectivity*, which is revealed in the ultimate view of the book. Despite many proposals, thus, the structural analyses remain controversial among scholars. Despite its shortcomings, each approach, however, gives us an insight into the structural interpretation of the Apocalypse in its own way. Therefore, my attempt has been built on the positive contributions of proposed structures, their flaws having been rejected. A good structure for the Apocalypse is one that provides a clue to the theology or reveals John's intention to his readers well.

On the other hand, this study, dealing with the narratological approach to the structure of the Apocalypse, follows Hartman's (1983) proposal, arguing that the element of

*function* should be included in addition to those of *form* and *content* for the more technical definition of the genre of apocalypse. Therefore, an important goal of this study is to reveal the content (the theology of the author - the semantic structure) and the function (the rhetorical effect on the reader - the functional structure), unveiled through the form (the syntactic structure with the author's intentional arrangement, narrative plot).

### Chapter Three

The postulation, the narrative analysis of the Apocalypse has to consider four aspects: syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and also (oral) communicational, was justified by using the narrative diagram of Chatman (1978). Here the three aspects of the structural analyses - *syntactic, semantic, and function structure* – were dealt with. The fourth element of the (orally) communicational element is a kind of contextual element in the ancient oral-oriented world to be considered in each structure analysis, so that I did not allot it a separate section.

### Chapter Four

To establish the syntactic structure of the Apocalypse on the different Narrative Unit levels, the following procedure was followed:

(1) At the micro-level, the whole text was delimited, by finding the changing point of narrative elements such as event or theme change, the appearance of the repetitive phrases and time marker, place change and (group) character(s) change. (2) Basic Narrative Units (UL1) were identified, primarily using "*inverted parallelism*," "*inclusion*," or the distinction between *the scene (mimesis)* and the *summary (diegesis)* as supporting factors. (3) Based on these narrative units (UL1), at the next unit level (UL2), the narrative units were grouped under either "*the same theme*" or "*the same event*" as main integrating principles as shown in 4.3.2.2.2. (4) At an even higher unit level (UL3), the concept of *plot* was applied to the whole narrative, to reveal its dynamic structure at the global level. Before this stage (up to UL2), each integration had taken place only among adjacent small units, so that all the effort hitherto could be



seen as local but not global. (5) the narrative units on higher levels (UL4) were grouped into introduction, body, and ending according to epistolary format or by the way in which the author leads into/out of the visionary world. Finally, the book was identified as an integral unit (UL5). Based on the results, the narrative-syntactic (namely surface-level) structure and fundamental-syntactic (namely deep-level) structure were established.

### Syntactic Structure: Form

John's theological narrative shows an artistic planned structure. As the Apocalypse was presupposed as an integral unity and the mere compilation of sources was denied, a new structural model was established in relation to the Apocalypse as a whole in preference to any one particular part of it. Plot, as an important expression of *narrative-syntactic* (namely, surface-level) structure, has to do with the relationships existing among the incidents of a narrative. The plot of the Apocalypse shows movement from an unstable state to a stable condition, which means the establishment of God's sovereignty on earth - "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In the meantime, the *fundamental-syntactic* (namely, deep-level) structure,<sup>1</sup> established on the power axis and the volitional axis of Greimas' actantial model (1966), shows that *God* (as originator) for the purpose of *the new creation* (as object), send *Jesus* (as subject) with the mission to *judge and save* the world (as receiver). In doing so, Jesus is opposed by the anti-divine powers (as opponent) but defeated them on the cross and continue to do so by means of the witnessing activity of the Spirit and the saints (as helpers). John's narrative, as a result, may represent the quest of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, epitomized by the New Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> The deep-level structure is often referred to as "the permanent structure behind all narrative" (cf. Stibbe (1994:35)).

## Chapter Five

This chapter aimed to identify the fundamental-semantic structures (the macrostructure) based on the narrative-semantic structure (the concentric structure) bearing out the relations between the narrative form and the theology of the book as follows:

(1) The five plotted levels (NL0, 1, 1/2, 2 and 3) of narrativity were applied to John's theological narrative. This study found that the visionary stories (level 2) are formally overarched by John's experience/report (level 1). On the other hand, each of the narrative levels (1, 1/2, 2 and 3) presupposes and implies *the macronarrative* (NL0), and in turn draws its significant/integrated meaning from *the macronarrative*, the so-called *God's story* with a link to the timeframe, the unplotted/comprehensive narrative level in universal respects.

(2) *The macrostructure* can be defined as *the theological theme* John seeks to express through his work in order to persuade the readers/audience to transvalue their understanding of the events occurring on earth and see it from God's point of view. The results are that God is in control, God reigns through the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (13:8), God reigns at the death of Jesus, "the faithful witness" to God's truth on the cross, and Jesus uses God's words as weapon against evil powers even at the end.

### Semantic Structure: Theology

The Apocalypse is theologically bound together by Jesus Christ's activity. John's narrative revolves around Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (13:8), who is the cohering theological element of the structure. In particular, the death of Jesus on the cross provides the rest of the story with meaning. The intentional sequence helps not only to communicate the theological meaning of the events but also to achieve a specific effect on the hearers/readers.

## Chapter Six

Apocalyptic stories are generally designed to shape the imagination of the hearer, to allow one to view one's historical situation in a new way, and to allow one to act in a new way. In doing so, John's narrative alters the audience's perception of the world — it transforms them from victims of Roman oppression, for example, into victors over the ultimate evil-forces. To find out how this happens, the transforming power of the Apocalypse has been approached in two contexts: in both the literary context (6.1.) and the socio-historical contexts (6.2.).

(1) The first part dealt with a narrative strategy, "*reversal*," to persuade the audience, which is related to the aim of John's narrative to transform the listeners' improper or problematic view of a theme into a proper view of that theme. Insofar as it tries to persuade the audience, John's narrative can be called *rhetoric*.

(2) The latter part deals with *the transforming power* of John's narrative when it is used in the external context — that is, the liturgical context as well as the socio-political context. There are three opinions: the first two support the approaches that the Apocalypse tries to change the "*understanding*" of one's socio-historical situation, either *increasing the tension* in the desired direction or *reducing opposing forces*, according to Lewin's theory (1961), and the third concerns an idea that the Apocalypse attempts to transform "*one's essential self*" as one changes one's identity in initiation, according to Van Gennep's theory (1960). In my opinion, each opinion reveals only one aspect of the rhetorical power the Apocalypse has to the audience/readers in the rhetorical situation, so that all three approaches should be honoured.

(3) And finally, as a result, a diagram to illustrate the transforming power of John's narrative in literary and external context appears at the end of chapter six.

### Functional Structure: Transforming Power

The rhetorical effect serves to move the reader from the misguided ideas of his/her current world to the heavenly perspective. Therefore the Apocalypse rhetorically

requests the Christian *to witness* to God's word until the end of the world and the wayward *to repent* because the time is near.

As a result, the three-dimensional approach of the form, the content and the function of the Apocalypse is based on the analyses of the narrative structure, which has not yet been considered fully enough in the study of the book hitherto. This discussion is, therefore, pioneering and preliminary and it needs to be complemented by further research.

### The Apocalypse as "Johannine Version of Gospel"<sup>2</sup>

The Apocalypse must be seen as a great creative work designed to encourage the distressed of John's time on the immediate level but also as an authoritative scripture for every believer, reminding them of the Lord's truth in a fresh, effective and dramatic way- the development from the promise to the fulfillment, which is epitomized by the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God (21:2). His promise for his people would not fail at all but be fulfilled through his judgment and vindication. Therefore the Apocalypse can be said to be *the Johannine version of gospel* in the sense of its revolving around Jesus Christ, whose activity constitutes its core theology. Moreover, on the functional aspect, the Apocalypse provides a gospel story in and through which the people of God discover *who they are* and *what they are to do*.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Bowman (1955: 439), "the NT scriptures have developed three new literary creations – the gospel, the letter, and the Apocalypse – to serve as vehicles of the gospel message." All the prophetic Scriptures, he argues, share two characteristics of the gospel message – first, an unmistakable continuity and second, a remarkable creativity in literary forms. Additionally, he allows that the Apocalypse contains an occasional enigma (μυστήριον - 1:20; 10:7; 17:5,7). He points out, however, that other NT books also contain enigma as a necessary ingredient. Paul refers to the gospel message as a μυστήριον. E.g., Rom. 11:25; 16:15; 1Cor. 2:1,7; 4:1; 15:51; Col.1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3. Ephesians is a prime example of NT books that celebrate a divine mystery (1955:436).



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